

ANTI-COMMANDO

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BY

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AND

IAN HAMILTON

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY	13
II. 'YOU DID IT!'	33
III. BLOOD WILL TELL	125
IV. K. FORGETS	181
APPENDIX I. WAR OFFICE LETTER (disallowing Woolls-Sampson the V.C.)	201
APPENDIX II. THE DEATH OF BENSON	203

ILLUSTRATIONS

RISING COLUMN COMMANDERS, 1901	<i>to face page 34</i>
THE WOOLSACK	<i>to face page 42</i>
THE WILY OLD COUNSELLOR	<i>to face page 68</i>
THE BURIAL OF THE OLD 92ND	<i>to face page 82</i>
BRUCE HAMILTON AND HIS STAFF ON TREK IN 1900	<i>to face page 132</i>
WINSTON CHURCHILL AND THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH AWAITING A REPLY FROM BRUCE HAMILTON TO A MESSAGE FROM IAN HAMILTON. THE BATTLE OF DIAMOND HILL IS IN FULL SWING	<i>to face page 132</i>
BOER SURRENDERS NEAR ERMELO	<i>to face page 144</i>
COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA WRITING OUT ORDERS	<i>to face page 144</i>
VRYHEID, 1901: WOOLLS-SAMPSON AND BRUCE HAMIL- TON	<i>to face page 148</i>
LT.-COL. F. SHAW, STAFF OFFICER TO BRUCE HAMILTON	<i>to face page 152</i>
BRUCE HAMILTON SEEKING FOR TROUBLE WITH HIS GLASSES, 1900	<i>to face page 152</i>
COMMANDANT GENERAL BOTHA CONSULTING WITH THE COMMANDANT OF THE WAKERSTROOM COMMANDO, 1902	<i>to face page 154</i>

ILLUSTRATIONS

GENERAL CHRISTIAN DE WET AND GENERAL HART AS
TRAVELLING COMPANIONS *to face page 178*

CHRISTIAN DE WET SAILING TO ENGLAND
to face page 178

COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA SAILING TO ENG-
LAND *to face page 182*

GENERAL DE LA REY SAILING TO ENGLAND
to face page 182

THE FAR-FAMED I.L.H. *to face page 200*

A PANORAMA OF LADYSMITH: FROM OBSERVATION HILL,
LOOKING NORTH AND NORTH-WEST *at the end of the book*

A PANORAMA OF LADYSMITH: FROM OBSERVATION HILL,
LOOKING WEST AND SOUTH-WEST *at the end of the book*

A PANORAMA OF LADYSMITH: FROM NAVAL HILL, LOOKING
SOUTH AND EAST *at the end of the book*

MAPS

THE BATTLE OF ELANDSLAAGTE, OCTOBER 21, 1899
to face page 118

THE BATTLE OF ROODEWAL, APRIL 11, 1902
to face page 180

ANTI-COMMANDO

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

IF British and Dutch would only bury the hatchet deep and dance foxtrots over its grave; IF Dutch and British boys and girls could only snap their fingers at the old Fogies and Bogies who put Racialism before Patriotism every time they think, speak or write—why then, as sure as the sun won't shine in England tomorrow, the day will come when Africa, the dark Continent, the Cinderella Continent, will proudly hold her own with those three continental aces; those other three capital 'A's'—America, Asia and Australia. So soon as young Afrikanders begin to give nature free rein to transmute revenge and contempt into babies, the U.S.A. (or Union of South Africa) will begin to follow on the heels of that other U.S.A. of the West, sending the impulse of its new vitality pulsating wave upon wave northwards through Rhodesia. The Union of the British East African states is even now in the melting-pot of Fate. The Colonists of Kenya, governed by a casual and transient Bureaucracy and a 'Class' Secretary of State will feel they have at their backs a South Africa which really understands their problems. The moment the Cape—so happily baptized, but until now so unhappily nurtured—the moment South Africans cease

to embroil their political issues and exhaust their vital energies in barren recriminations, they will be free to start on the grandest trek of all—the trek, not from Cairo to the Cape as the route is now usually called, but from the Cape to Cairo, as it will be called. The road lies open, the way is being prepared, the Cape of Good Hope will then at long last begin to justify its godfathers and godmothers, for the one 'Good Hope' of the white races in Africa lies in a speedy amalgamation of those born warriors, the Anglo-Saxon South Africans and the Boers. By using the word 'warriors' I do not mean that the commandos are again to take the field—this time in the air. That is on the knees of the gods. But, speaking as one who prays as earnestly as any man, 'Give us peace in our time, O Lord,' and even transmutes it, sometimes rather hesitatingly, into 'Give men peace for all time, O Lord,' I know that in Africa the white races cannot yet disarm; not unless they are going to let 3000 years of civilization slide back into the pig-styes of savagery.

The Zulus and the Basutos—there's a fine tribute to the South African climate for breeding proper men! I have had thousands of the brave, childlike Senegalese under my command in war; Egyptians, also; and Fuzzy Wuzzy I have fought. None of these will stand against the Kaffir once good communications have brought North, South, East and West into close contact.

There is much debate at present as to whether or no Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda are to form a Union, together with cognate questions as to whether the descendants of the low-caste Indian coolies who have migrated into these countries and would never, had they

stayed in their own country, have been allowed by Brahmins or Moslems the smallest share in the government of India, are now to take a hand in settling the destinies of Africa. That cannot surely be? These talkers and writers must have overlooked the coming annihilation of distance, as we have understood it until now, by airways. The air commandos of the Union of South Africa should be about the best in the world. The white men of the South have all the qualities. Some day the South will control the continent. If the British and Dutch will cease calling one another Back-Veld Boer and Uitlander; will really mix that blood they once spilled so freely and become as one folk, a type of human being should emerge of which we already have a demonstration in the life and career of Theodore Roosevelt; and the commandos of a nation of Roosevelts would very soon begin to roam like young lions over the whole of Africa. Let anyone who reads this book and has read *Commando* imagine a Denys Reitz and a Woolls-Sampson rolled into one. How could the artificially concocted West and Central Africa resist such penetration? How could a native state like Abyssinia?

Amongst other advantages, a *real* Union of South Africa would put an extinguisher on to that confusion of tongues which has for too long brought oscillations and disturbances into the communications of the inhabitants of our planet.¹ No world-conqueror, not Alexander himself nor Caesar or even Superman Napoleon, has ever

¹'Comment?' says he; 'Come on,' says I; and with that I hits him one in the eye.

The English army is 'laughably small', says the Kaiser; 'the English army is contemptible', translates Northcliffe.

consciously set himself to tackle the Tower of Babel problem; no word-conqueror, Homer, Isaiah, Virgil, Shakespeare, has ever even aspired to blow up that dark Tower with the bombshells of his idiom. But—if only South Africa can come to terms with herself, then, in course of time, she should be able to impose those same terms upon Africa.

Why should the Cape of Good Hope not become in due course the hub of the universe? The Cape has the climate; the strategic position, whether regarded from the air or the sea; the proper sort of boys and girls—just exactly the proper, cousinly distance for a successful out-cross—for Supermen and Superwomen breeding on a gigantic scale. Looking out upon the world with the eyes of a not unsuccessful exhibitor of cattle¹ I could reel off half a dozen families of British aristocrats who might have been saved from destruction by the heir carrying off a Boer girl from a veld farm with a dowry perhaps of a couple of thousand sheep, instead of marrying in a perfectly flat and banal manner a played-out descendant of someone whose three hundredth ancestor came over with the Conqueror, or by trying—poor feeble creature—to crack that hardest of hard nuts, the regulation American heiress with a couple of million dollars, for every cent of which she wishes to get full value.

To me there is no doubt at all about it. The conjunction of a very fine out-cross of blood with a perfect climate (England with the nasty bits left out) would for once produce something well worth the pangs of labour. Let us cast our eyes backwards. Let us look right back

¹See *Belted Galloways*, published by Vinton & Co. Ltd.

to that moment pregnant with fate when a female ape was giving birth to the Missing Link. What air, water and soil are responsible for having produced that portentous creature? On 14th April, 1931, a column of *The Times* was devoted to the most recent efforts of Sir Arthur Keith. Sir Arthur, it appears, and a pack of professors after him, are in full cry after Adam and Eve. Not the biblical pair of God-created beings, whom they heartily despise, but Darwin's self-made Man. The scent was getting hotter and they were on the point of running from scent to view. They had, in fact, just unearthed 'the brainiest of all known anthropoid forms' (that is to say, apes). Only one tiny twist of the brain, it appears, had debarred this super-ape from rising to the idea of fig-leaves. And where did they unearth it? In the Transvaal.

Who has not seen a creature in pants and trousers being told by another creature in knickers and skirts to 'be a man!' Of him it may truly be said he is trembling on the verge of being an ape. So was this South African chap trembling, only it was the other way. He was trembling on the verge of being a man and only missed the fig-leaves (so much more becoming than laurel leaves) by a short head. But if the South African air and water were able in prehistoric times to produce the brainiest apes, why not now the brainiest breed of men? For all Hertzog or Smuts knows, and they happen to be an extra brainy pair (although Hertzog is sometimes a bit dreamy)¹,—for all they know, I repeat, South Africa may be in

¹After talking to me once for full five minutes in Mr. Winston Churchill's drawing room, Hertzog begged me to tell him whether an old general called Ian Hamilton was not dead.

labour at this instant giving birth to the next big noise in evolution by breeding a new Link, a link not between beasts and men but between men and angels. Why not? Ten million years hence an unimaginable Seraphita may finger the petrified skull of her human ancestress and say to the cherubim in attendance, 'Here's another of those Anglo-Dutch links! Just one more brain whorl and she'd have got away with the other dimension'.

The angels, it will be observed, speak English—not Dutch, German, French, Spanish or Russian. I know also what the devils speak when they are at home, but I shall keep my knowledge to myself. The other languages I have mentioned are all very well for their own limited sphere; none of them is worth a dam¹ to an angel. German is a grand language, rich beyond all others (it seems to me) in the raw material of words and forms that have not hardened into *clichés*: for singing and poetry it stands (to me) supreme, turning Italian or Spanish into lollipops and making the French accent sound dry, hard and metallic. But, it is too guttural for celestial use; it is a bit heavy—not nimble enough for winged beings. I imagine Goethe must sometimes have felt that, as also Wagner when writing his *Ring*. As a bit of a book-worm, I dare not say anything against French for I revere the style of its prose; the elegance of its idioms; the wonderful vehicle it supplies to the artist for the conveyance of polished witticisms; the structural balance and poise which can be attained by a skilful use of its sentences;

¹In case anyone should think the compositor has forgotten a letter, I must absolve him from blame by explaining that a dam is the smallest coin on earth, worth only three cowrie shells. The Duke of Wellington often brought this word into his conversation.

but without wishing to hurt the feelings of anyone it must be said that linguists, whether Russian, German, English, Dutch, Scandinavian or Japanese are pretty well agreed that in the matter of singing or poetry; of, for instance, translating Tolstoi, Goethe or Shakespeare, they cannot quite bring it off—they cannot quite carry either the depth of feeling or the vulgar humour (when there is any) across to the reader. Many great critics—Edmund Gosse *par exemple*, would angrily contradict me. No matter; them's my sentiments. And, after all, the main thing is, English has got away with it. Escaping from the yammer of the Tower of Babel, and from all the awful sounds which may be drawn nightly from the atmosphere by a good wireless set, English has broken cover, and keen as the other nations may be, and splendid their pack of word-sounds, they will never catch it up again. So now, unless our younger broadcasters, film talkers, actors, journalists and novel writers, by being idle and conceited and by failing to play up to their unexampled opportunities, are going to sell the pass—unless this happens, we are going to keep the lead. Jan Smuts, de la Rey and Botha, alone amongst the Boer delegates assembled for the Vereeniging Conference, seemed to possess imaginations powerful enough to pierce the mists of back-veld prejudice and to perceive that no congeries of tribes clustered on the outer rind of any segment, however large, of this twirling globe could reasonably aspire to spread themselves over it unless they first showed themselves able to cure themselves of their own particular impediment. Secondly, that they must be handicapped in their efforts to impress themselves upon their neighbours unless their own inhabi-

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tants shared—or at least took equal pride in—the same customs and traditions; thirdly, that prestige and influence come much more easily to a nation which has at its back a world literature and a record of outstanding exploits in war.

All the remarks in the previous paragraph have been italicized, so to say, by the appearance upon the world-stage of talkies, wireless and broadcasting. These were not dreamed of during the peace negotiations of Vereeniging, but Smuts, Botha and de la Rey acted as if they sensed them. As a pointer dog scents a hare squatting over the hillocks and far away, so they stiffened all over and refused to follow Christian de Wet and the backveld band. They felt that the Bible in Taal would never bring that hare into their game bag. They felt that the only piece of Boer poetry, a translation of Cowper's *John Gilpin*, would never put salt on its tail. Africaans was too rudimentary once the farm dropped out of the conversation. The Taal was not capable of being hammered into an implement for slick, quick commercial intercourse, still less of being polished up into an instrument of scientific investigation or for the drafting of laws. As for Hollands, why Hollands? Broad Lowland Scots is almost as like the Taal spoken in the West of the Orange Free State as is the language of twentieth century Holland. The Dutch of Holland were a very fine people standing proudly upon the story of their turbulent past and on the periods of grandeur through which, whether as insurgents, as merchants, or as sailors, they had acquitted themselves so well. Still, too, though dwindling in the world's eye they possessed overseas colonies and could in some respects stand comparison with their

huge over-shadowing neighbours Germany and France. But with England? Never! Not as a good base for an overseas land which aspired to become some day itself a world power. Neither in literature nor in the speakers or leaders of their language could Holland compare with England any more than Queen Wilhelmina compared with Queen Victoria or Java with India. Therefore Jan Smuts, de la Rey and Botha plumped for a free choice for everyone between English and the Taal on the bilingual system as practised already between French and English in Canada. This is as much as any fair-minded person, be he Boer or British, could have expected. Supposing a genius to be born in the Transvaal tomorrow, he will not now be pinned down to the backveld by the Taal. That is the great thing. He will be able to speak direct to the great world on the wireless.

As to the future, there is very little fear. In 1900, at Oliphant's Nek in the Transvaal, I won the heart of a little Boer girl aged about twelve by saving her pet calf from the clutches of my own men at the cost of half a bottle of whisky which by some miracle I was able to produce from my Cape cart. The scene rises up before me as a picture. The fair-haired child clinging on desperately to the neck of the terrified calf. The ragged, hungry troopers, half sorry for the child but full set also upon roast veal for supper.¹ Above us towered the rocky 'Pass of the Elephants' through which de Wet had just given us the slip, and the smoke of his camp fires was

¹It must be remembered that after a few thousand miles of trek the British soldier was not turned out in apple-pie kit, with plum and apple jam in his belly as he was, excepting on rare occasions, during the Great War.—Ian H.

still curling up into the sky. So now that the pet calf was saved the pretty little enemy girl condescended to tell the old khaki commander all about everything. The grown-up specimens of Boer womanhood were usually bitter and irreconcilable. Sometimes a girl might talk a bit, but all the time (supposing you had the proper outfit for a commander) you would be well aware of the meaning of those quick, sly glances at the far horizon, and that she was praying all she knew to God Almighty that de la Rey and his bold riders might come galloping over the skyline. Below Oliphant's Nek perhaps that little girl still lives. If so, she may remember that she gave the enemy Chief some dark and forbidden secrets. She confessed to him under promise of secrecy not the words, actions or intentions of Christian de Wet but the Christian names of her two greatest girl friends; she admitted that her favourite amusements were reading and dancing; also, that the favourite book of herself and the two others was called, 'Cometh up as a Flower' and was by Rhoda Broughton, a lady she would very much like to meet. The world and his wife are sick of Romance—for the nonce. Melodrama and sex-appeal are taking its place. And little Boer girls must still read novels, so what chance has the Taal against Margaret Kennedy, Ethel (whichever Ethel you prefer), Edgar Wallace; or, for the more serious-minded, Galsworthy and the dynamic Winston Churchill? Already, though Dutch may make a gallant fight it is doomed—and yet, not altogether. Throughout Onsland and thence by degrees throughout Africa, Dutch will be used to enrich and refresh the English. Within a generation from now the blood of such pure-bred Dutch and British as may remain will

harbour precious little of that racial bitterness still being fanned and fostered by press editors and politicians to increase their own circulation and importance. The sooner the good sense which is the heritage of both races can come to their rescue and help them to justify the foresight of those Boer generals of 1902, the sooner the veld will knock out the pampas and the steppes. The moment racial barriers are swept away, Dutch and British will rub their eyes and see with astonishment that their prejudices were artificial—that, in verity, they never should have existed at all.

So long as any old Briton or Boer has consistently acted in what he honestly held to be the interests of South Africa his memory will deserve well of all South Africans whatsoever. Dutchmen will feel proud of Cecil Rhodes; Britons will clasp Oom Paul to their bosoms, as indeed they already do in a shame-faced sort of way. For we feel, all of us, we ex-soldiers of the South African War (and I speak as vice-president of their Association), that the British Empire would suffer quite a loss if Uncle Paul were to be snipped out of our picture-books. His pipe and his wife, his hat, his house and, above all, his Bible simply could not be spared. I'd almost as soon do without Noah. If, then, we feel like this about Paul Kruger, is it not probable that a relatively small people like the South African Dutch will in due course come to feel they cannot afford to exclude Cecil Rhodes, or even Kitchener or Thomas Atkins, from their national portrait gallery at Pretoria. Milner, I daresay, will never get as far as varnishing day. Some traditions die hard. Only about six or seven minutes before the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed (with a precious pen—for the

possession of which the Chief of Staff, the Military Secretary and an Aide-de-camp had immediately afterwards a most unofficial scuffle)—only at the very last gasp of the war Milner let fall a remark which was, so far as any of the staff could see, not meant to be in any way offensive—but then it was sarcastically spoken. Thereupon de la Rey, jumping up from the table in wrath, was only held back by the coat tails from leaving the room. Kitchener, on the other hand, might say anything. When he expostulated with this self-same fiery de la Rey and said to him, 'Really, General, so much heat is not customary between delegates of civilized powers,' he answered quite good-temperedly, 'Your Excellency is a man of the world and has travelled far; no doubt you are right in what you say'. K. somehow got away with the farm-burning and dam-breaking: even the well-meant but entirely disastrous concentration camps seemed to do him no personal harm. And yet Kitchener was just as clear in favour of the farm-burning as Lord Bobs on the night that policy was decided and settled upon between them in the Chief's railway carriage after the battle of Belfast.

Here already a point has been reached which is one of the puzzles of collaboration. What do Erkmann Chatrian or other big writers like us two do when they differ? Toss up? Anyway, we have agreed each to put forward his own side of this question, which is as alive to-day under the surface of South African politics as it was on the days when the smoke of those sacrifices to the God of War was darkening the azure of the heavens. One of us puts the case thus:

While on this subject I would like to point out for

historical purposes and fair-minded judgment that Colonel Reitz shows that in every instance in which he touched at any Dutch residence or farm-house either in the Transvaal, Orange Free State or Cape Colony, while fighting, he received (as was not unnatural) food, equipment, or intelligence.

Major Burnham, the Scout, in his *Scouting on Two Continents*, gives numerous instances where he found Dutch farmhouses occupied by Boer soldiers and used by them as fortresses in their operations. They, no doubt, received all the assistance which Colonel Reitz did from the inmates.

The author of *On Commando* should, therefore, be the first to acknowledge that Lord Roberts was right *from a military point of view* in destroying these places and removing the inmates if he was ever to bring the war to a close. It is necessary to emphasize this point, as his act is one of the grievances of the Dutch part of the South African population. They should digest the evidence which the two writers named have given first-hand.

The other puts the case t'other way:

The order was issued because of a lack of synthetic imagination. This would have shown the two ex-Eastern potentates, Bobs of Kandahar and K. of Khartoum, that the Boers were very like Englishmen and not in the least like Afghans or Dervishes. Both Bobs and K., through long service in the East, had lost something of their powers of gauging accurately the feelings of a white man of fighting race who has had his house picked out deliberately and burnt deliberately to the ground with all its little family records, in order to encourage the others. After the war, Mrs. Botha (rather slim, we

thought it of her) showed my wife a picture of her lovely farm and gardens on the Swaziland border, and so tempted her on to express admiration and pleasure. But so soon as my wife had duly said her say, Mrs. Botha whipped out another photo showing the hideous blackened skull of a house surrounded by the rubbish heaps and broken, withered things into which the fruit and flower picture had been transformed, alas, by soldiers fighting on the British side. How could my wife keep the tears back from her eyes? Another Boer victory! A second Amajuba! I want to try and point out once for all that it pays Englishmen to go on fighting like gentlemen and making peace like gentlemen¹—it pays in the long run beyond any question, but it pays also at the time. Militarily speaking, the burning was a blunder. The farms were going out of cultivation, anyway. To a farmer it is an immense inducement towards peace to see his farm standing idle, his gear going to pieces and sowing time coming round again. But, if the farm has been burnt and the implements destroyed he becomes desperate. There is nothing to make peace for.

The Concentration Camps bungle stood on rather a different platform. To my thinking (then and now) Kitchener, Roberts and Milner showed a lack of statesmanship in not gauging what the effect upon the world of European and American womanhood would be of thus harrying the homes of the wives and daughters of the Boers. On a point like this the force of feminine

¹What a different world to-day had we remembered this at Versailles, or (what would have served equally well) had Kitchener been there to take command of these civilians so ignorant of the heart of the fighting men and of the chivalrous side of the psychology of war.

opinion was far, far more powerful in the days before women had their 'rights' and could mount platforms themselves to spout and be contradicted. Further, the moment chosen for introducing the edict so much hated by the troops into execution showed a complete absence of that cunning which is so much a part of statesmanship that we are accustomed to speak of statecraft. Another couple of months and the Boer women would have been begging to be brought in and given shelter and rations. They must have done so on three out of four of the farms. We should then have received high credit for doing what—as we actually did do it—has given the Germans their retort if ever we say a word about the burning of French and Belgian homesteads. Personally, the burning of a town house would lie no heavier on my conscience than shooting a cock pheasant, but to burn a farm or a haystack is, according to my ethics, utterly heathen and damnable. I never authorized such an act, and I'd sooner have stood a Court Martial than do so. I do not think Major Burnham should be our guide.¹ After all, the march through Georgia was an ugly and savage affair. The Sherman statue in Washington, unveiled whilst I was there in 1903, by the army of the Cumberland, fine statue as it is, caused some better remarks even during the actual unveiling. Seeing it again the other day I felt that, striking as it sculpturally may be, Washington would be better without it. Why the women of Georgia put up with it seems strange; our Scotswomen would not, I don't think. But, when all is said and done, Kitchener somehow never got on the nerves of the Boers. We may yet see his statue if not at

¹By the Judge. His only saved thing he mentioned.

Pretoria at least at Johannesburg. He didn't go the lengths of Sherman; he looked the other way when subordinates refused to burn, and he was all for good compensation and for rebuilding after the peace. Also, he captured the Dutch imagination and, I think too, they somehow sensed that whatever his crudities of action might be, he was fighting, all the last six months, for an agreed peace, and that a hard fight of it he was having with Chamberlain, Brodrick and Milner, who were fighting just as hard for an unconditional surrender, to be crowned, no doubt, once the rifles were laid down, with something chivalrous and forgiving on the lines of the Versailles Treaty. Lay down your rifles, brave enemy, and trust your conditions to the magnanimity of Messrs. Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George! Well, we may fairly, I think, surmise that Versailles has rung down the curtain for ever on that sort of confidence trick. The Boers were right and Kitchener was right—Kitchener who, had he lived, would have certainly thrown all his influence into trying to bring the Great War to a close by an agreed peace.

The years between 1880 and 1902 hold the records of the heroic age of the S.A.R. Within that period hundreds of gallant adventurers entered on either side into the lists and thousands of glittering deeds were done. Here and there one or two of the gems have been picked up and set into print; but most of them lie there like any other common pebble, as once those diamonds lay which sparkle to-day in the tiaras of beautiful film stars. Colonel Denys Reitz has set an example to all who wish to do a bit of spade-work in that old claim only half worked out by the writers of the first six or seven years

of this century and now buried under the immense *débris* of the Great War. He has set that example by being absolutely fair as between British and Dutch. And he has done more than that. He has given a lasting picture of the Boers themselves in their struggle which raises them to a level with the bravest and most determined men of antiquity. His own character stands out unwittingly in his recital as the epitome of all that was best in their skill, endurance and courage. At the same time he pays the right tribute (though in exile while writing) to the generosity, humaneness and fair-dealing which he experienced from most of his opponents, and has no hesitation in condemning anything ugly or craven on his own side. A considerable number of Boers who to my knowledge ran through strings of thrilling adventures and lived to tell the tale, have never yet told it and probably could not tell it if they tried. Denys Reitz happens to be what the late Mr. Arnold Bennett, wisest of writers, kindest of critics, used to call 'an author'. 'You are an Author', he has very unexpectedly exclaimed quite loudly amongst a crowd of distinguished men of letters as he extended a welcoming hand to a guest until then undistinguished, for ever afterwards to feel very distinguished. I don't mean to say Denys Reitz could have written an *Old Wives' Tale*: I do say he can make his pen speak like a book: and it was when I was reading his book that there first arose in my mind very clearly the memory of another man in particular whose adventures would certainly stand comparison with those of Denys Reitz, and from whom, during his lifetime, neither pain, nor prison, nor praise nor wild horses could, except when he was sure there was nae chiel of the note-taking

fraternity within hearing, drag out one syllable about them. His whole life had been one long wooing of danger and adventure, but his hot heart was armoured like the boiler of H.M.S. *Inflexible* in the impenetrable steel of silence. I speak of a man of war and his name was Woolls-Sampson—Sir Aubrey Woolls-Sampson.

Since *On Commando* was written it has seemed almost a duty to two men at least to attempt to show England and South Africa the other side of Reitz's modestly told but all the more obviously heroic and patriotic adventures by narrating the part played in a series of adventures by another hero of British blood, born and bred in South Africa, exactly as was the Boer fighter, and ever imbued through and through with the deepest love for what, having already fought for it, he considered his very own, his native land. As regards that earlier fighting, he had played a part in every South African scrap, affair or engagement that took place during his adult lifetime excepting only the Gealeka and Basuto campaigns. As to his record during the great war of 1899-1902, he rendered services which were recognized by his appointment as Honorary Colonel in the British Army and as a Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, which still carries with it a certain social status in Europe; a status no American billionaire ever *really* attains. On the other hand, let it freely be granted that the acceptance by Denys Reitz of banishment to Madagascar sooner than take the oath of allegiance to the King of England must stand in unjaundiced eyes as an honour surpassing any social status or any decoration, were it that of the Garter itself. As a rule, it may be the case that an honour bestowed

upon a man by others is better worth having than anything he can possibly give to himself but, just now and then, a man may do something purely on his own which takes the shine out of any earthly recognition. On that ground then we may safely let the two champions rest at quits upon their laurels. But we may quite fairly compare the actual services rendered to their respective causes by Denys Reitz and Woolls-Sampson between Elands-laagte in Natal, fought on 21st Oct., 1899, and Roodeval in the far Western Transvaal, fought on the 11th April, 1902. Afrikaners have got *Commando* and are grateful for it, so now they should have a chance of seeing a corresponding picture as a counterpoise and contrast. Naturally, it is not likely that a biographical sketch should be so live a work as an autobiography by a Boer who is still, everyone is glad to know, very much alive. But Sir Aubrey deserves that the effort should be made and if, in any way, it should succeed, it will be understood that it is perhaps lucky for Denys Reitz that Woolls-Sampson was not with the 17th Lancers when he scuppered those brave but rather unsophisticated warriors. Reitz, using his own rifle, may have accounted for his tens; Woolls-Sampson, wielding the machine, accounted for his hundreds.

The methods were the direct versus the indirect. But this historical part of the story must be left to its proper place, later on. My present aim is merely to put in a justification for trying to tell folk interested in the evolution of nations something more about Woolls-Sampson than could be gleaned by the average student who must depend upon military dispatches, histories of the war, or contemporaneous newspapers. Let us leave these some-

what indigent sources to speak for themselves and open with a letter written by one who, to the personal knowledge of the writer, once lived in the closest daily companionship with Woolls-Sampson, namely, 'Rawly', as he was then known, afterwards famous as Commander of the Fourth Army in France and, as Lord Rawlinson, Commander-in-Chief in India.

CHAPTER II

'YOU DID IT!'

TWENTY years after the great Boer War, Lord Rawlinson wrote these words to Woolls-Sampson:

'In 1914 and 1915 in France when things looked equally black' (as in Ladysmith) 'your example came many times to my memory and helped much to carry me through the dark days to the sunshine and triumph beyond. Problems of a different character face me to-day, but the road which leads to eventual solution is the one you originally indicated to me—unswerving determination to prevail in the cause of Empire.'

As one who knew Lord Rawlinson intimately from his youth upwards, I know also that the Rawly of 1922 did not too readily let himself go into this style of compliment. Events by that time had left a pretty deep scar upon his quick-witted, matter-of-fact mind. The first event to act as a certain steadier upon his character was the South African War itself, and especially the siege of Ladysmith. The reaction from the dreadful anxiety of Headquarters throughout the day and night of 6th January, 1900, followed by the shock of his arrival on the early morning of the 7th with Sir George White upon the point of Wagon Hill when he came right up against the dead Boers (magnificent men they were)

ANTI-COMMANDO

lying in a row ready to be handed over under a flag of truce to Joubert and surrounded by the bodies of British lads amongst whom lay several of his own friends—the shock of this caused him to shed tears—believe it or not, ye who saw only the cynical side of Rawly. The other occasion was disclosed to me many years later, in London, the day before he sailed for India for the last time. He was in the act of leaving my house; we were walking downstairs together when a flippant remark was made by me about—well, let us say about a mutual friend—a soldier—who had mistaken his profession. In the old days Rawly would have gone one better but to my surprise he responded very seriously, not to my representation of tragedy in a comic mask but by opening a window into his own heart. There was an ache there, it must be supposed, which it eased him to share with one of his oldest friends. What he said was: 'That is really very funny, but the fact is none of these sort of antics of fellows I used to like seem so funny to me now, ever since I went through that agony in October '14, when I was trying my best and actually doing my best for the Empire and when, advised by the hero of your tale, X—— was trying to cut my throat. The truth of it is—I'm a changed man inside; a changed man through and through; though outside much the same.' Then he departed and we saw him no more.

Now the point I want to make is this: do not let any reader take Lord Rawlinson's letter to Woolls-Sampson as a mere sample of that sort of half-true humbug which Commanders-in-Chief chuck about rather freely. The extract implies certain happenings which had left a deep



RISING COLUMN COMMANDERS, 1901

Left: General Sir Bruce Hamilton

Right: General Lord Rawlinson of Trent

mark upon the mind, until then so volatile and self-centred, of Rawly. The scar of the siege of Ladysmith was always sensitive, and throbbed at the thought of that desperately wounded member of the garrison—Woolls-Sampson—the way he had seen it through; aye, and helped others to see it through. As will be understood, I earnestly hope, when this book is finished, Woolls-Sampson’s character needed danger to make it shine forth from its reserve like a bright sword flashing out from its khaki scabbard. He possessed precisely those qualities of nerve and of the spirit which in Elizabeth’s days would have quickly led him either to dance with Queen Elizabeth at her Court or to dangle like a marionette with its head on one side from the gallows. He was rather like Drake except that he had no use for fine clothes or for beating the big drum. But although in Drake’s time three-quarters of the battle of life was already won by a baby born with three quarterings, there were not, after all, so many born in the purple that they could block all the avenues. To-day just look at the swarms of Regulars any Irregular or Territorial has to work through. If he gets there it’s as wonderful as a mushroom shoving its head through asphalt. In Woolls-Sampson’s time these Regulars, especially at the outbreak of the war, were in even more completely unchallenged possession of command, promotion, mentions, decorations, as compared with the Irregulars, than they are to-day. Many of those Regulars had nothing vital, no real call to service and adventure at the back of their cut-and-dried, strictly regulated careers. But their tenacity was wonderful. How many of that old lot who were stellenbosched or ran home of their own free

will from South Africa reappeared again in the Great War; let loose again to play hell at the Dardanelles or—though history does not record it—upon the Western Front, where, however, they often survived to be decorated owing to the peculiarity of static warfare, which rarely made a direct demand upon that quality of swift decision, always the hall-mark of the Commander in South African warfare. However, through all vicissitudes; whether acting as trooper, Colonel, or Intelligence Officer, Woolls-Sampson remained true to type, equally indifferent as to who got the credit or who was shouldered with the blame. He owed his qualities as well as his physique to his ancestors, and it is just as necessary in trying to size up the value of a man as it is in the case of a bull or stallion for the student to be informed as to the genesis of anyone whose career they may wish to understand. Also, it will be necessary to show how his training as a boy chanced to be an ideal education for his work in the Boer War.

His great-grandfather, Colonel Charles Sampson, was commissioned by the King as an Officer in the East India Company's service and was in the course of that service stationed at St. Helena. Coming events cast their shadows before, and certainly the shadow of Sir Aubrey Woolls-Sampson, great-grandson of Colonel Charles, was projected rather forcibly forward for him, seeing that this old boy took part in the expedition against the Cape in 1795 and fought against the Boers when three companies of his regiment were thus employed. His Commanding Officer wrote of him that 'he was on that occasion more than commonly active, his vigilance and exertions called forth the commendation

of all his superiors, and in skirmishing with the enemy in advancing he received a musket shot, severe and dangerous, in the groin.' As I said, coming events cast their shadows before—even that severe and dangerous wound in the groin.

In 1806 he took part in the expedition to the River Plate, and while the British were in possession of Buenos Aires he in a skirmish received a sword wound in the body. What happened to the Argentine who gave it him is not narrated, but seeing he was the great-great-grandfather of Woolls-Sampson, I think it may reasonably be assumed that there was nothing left of him to narrate. On his return to St. Helena, after being for a year a prisoner of war (again just like the hero of this book) he was promoted to a Captaincy and after a few years was appointed Garrison Quarter-Master and so continued during the internment of Napoleon Buonaparte. Among his papers is a copy of the Plan of Defence of the Island in case the French attempted to rescue the Great Soldier. Upon his retirement, in recognition of his long service and wounds he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

His son, Captain William Patrick Sampson, also held a Commission in the E.I.C., or Old John Company as it was called, until the British Government took over the affairs of that remarkable organization, when he retired on pension to the Cape. He had married at St. Helena a Miss Knipe, daughter of Colonel Knipe of the Scots Greys, but whether she was the 'Beautiful Miss Knipe' mentioned in Lord Rosebery's *Last Phase*, or her sister, cannot now be determined. Anyway, it is quite interesting to be given a line as to where Aubrey Woolls-

Sampson may have drawn his rather uncommon good looks.

Captain Sampson served in one of the early Kaffir Wars and received its medal. He also foreshadowed in many ways the characteristics of our Woolls-Sampson. Unbending, intolerant of compromise, implacably set in his opinions, he went his way regardless of opposition, criticism, or consideration of profit or loss. He was in many ways his own enemy, but he didn't care a hang and never climbed down or cried *peccavi*: a beak-nosed old gentleman, with straight-cut moustache, and eyes fierce, humorous or grave as the mood took him; gruff, virile, and on the whole kindly. He was one of the staunchest supporters of the Reverend W. Long in his famous contest with Bishop Grey during the 'sixties. The story goes that on one occasion, holding a civil commission at Capetown under the Governor of the Colony, and being found fault with by his Excellency for some cause or another—he, being certain that he was in the right, told the Governor bluntly that he could have his commission back and would no longer hold the office.

Woolls-Sampson's father never served as a practical soldier. He contented himself with joining the first Volunteer Corps raised in Capetown after the Crimean War, which had given an impulse towards the formation of such bodies. According to the family tradition he was a man of ideas rather than a man of action. But his wife, Margaret Woolls, was altogether a remarkable woman. Of masculine sense, possessing a firm grip of realities, she was intensely practical, keen-minded, and as implacable as Woolls-Sampson's grandfather in what she con-

sidered to be right: in every way she was noted in the society in which she moved as a strong, uncompromising character. On one occasion the youthful Aubrey, in the absence of his father at the Diamond Fields, determined to run away from home because of some fancied course of injustice by her towards him. His mother coming to hear of this, sent for the boy, and said, 'I hear you are going to run away. Don't do that, just pack up your things and say good-bye.'

This sort of dealing with insubordination took the wind out of the boy's sails—for a time; but he nursed the resolve until a couple of years later when, getting the chance, he vamoosed.

His mother's father, Captain Woolls, was Port Captain at Simon's Bay, in its heyday before that monument to human audacity and vision, the Suez Canal, walked on to the map out of the brain of Ferdinand de Lesseps and was secured for the British Empire by her most splendid adventurer, Disraeli. Oh! that a touch of their magic might inspire our counsels to-day, when, in succession to Bonar Law, a Baldwin and a Ramsay Macdonald see the Mid-Scotland Canal lying to their hands, begging to be engineered and yet let the whole of the West of Scotland slide slowly, yet quite perceptibly, to the devil.

When sent to Woolwich to enter for the Artillery young Woolls was selected by lot among his companions to tie the legs of the Board Members to their chairs when they met; that is positively the only outstanding action of his life, and for the prank he was promptly expelled. He joined the East India Company's marine, and ultimately arrived in South Africa to link—through his daughter—with the Sampson line from St. Helena.

Mrs. Woolls was of Danish descent, a strong-minded woman, who passed on some of her character to her daughter, Margaret. The name Woolls is spelt in the British Official History of the Boer War as Wools. That is not the worst mistake in the Official History, but it is pretty bad. For a Woolls to have one of his 'l's' dropped is as bad as putting an 'h' on to an ell. Instead of feeling proud every time he is mentioned he grinds his teeth and curses. Even if he is a Judge sitting on the bench, still he might curse. The name lingers on in Hampshire in the South of England and no doubt was once spelt Woolles, the Saxon genitive of wool, in the days when a man's occupation was given him as a surname. In Fareham Old Church will be found a tablet to the memory of the Reverend T. A. Woolls who officiated there for many years in the eighteenth century. There was also a Reverend Aubrey Woolls, rector.

Some time before the Boer War Aubrey Sampson, for family reasons sufficient to himself, adopted the name of Woolls-Sampson.

So much for the heredity of our hero, and probably it is as much as the average reader will stand. But the day is at hand when the precise breeding and birth of a mortal will be eagerly inquired into by his associates, not because of any snobbish curiosity but with an assurance that there lies the master key to his behaviour and conduct under every and any stress of circumstances. A good many years of close attention to this matter have convinced me that heredity governs, far more than we imagine, the manner in which we deal with circumstances. But beyond our inherited qualities or natural qualities there lies the great field of necessity. The path

we take under stress of necessity is generally chosen in accordance with our natural bias which, at any rate in a strong nature, seeks the outlet of opportunity. These rules would become ordinary recognized working hypotheses were it not for environment. What would happen to the pup of a hardy sheep-dog or a clever lurcher if it were fed from its birth upon almond cake and ortolans; if it were taken out to exercise by a footman with a pink riband round its neck? Would it be able to play up to its heredity and turn a sheep or catch a hare? No, never. Yet that's the mill the sons and daughters of too many, especially of the new rich, are put through, as they loll through a luxurious childhood. Luckily for the Empire the upbringing of Woolls-Sampson did not take place in the bosom of a profiteer's family.

My brother's earliest exploit occurred when he was three or more years old. It had no prophetic value in the sense loved by biographers; indeed, like a dream, it ran contrariwise.

We lived at that time—1859 or 1860—in a house in Cape Town which had a yard at the back with a stable closed by two doors, in which, among other things, fowls and wood were kept, but no horses. In a corner of one of the doors was a square hole giving the fowls exit and entrance. Those being the days when all beer was imported, Aubrey's father had stored a large, square wooden case of Allsopp's Pale Ale in that stable with locked doors. One day the whole family went off to have a picnic at Kalk Bay. We drove in carriages and four,¹ and the drivers were Malays wearing blue cloth coats

¹The journey from Cape Town to Kalk Bay was considered too much for two horses in those days.

ANTI-COMMANDO

and tall, pagoda-like mat-hats. Some naval officers, either from the *Cossack* or the *Seringapatam* (pre-iron-clad frigates) had been invited from Simon's Town, and were very much all there, it being remembered that two of our aunts were very fascinating persons with whom they had already danced and probably even flirted at Government House. The picnic opened well. The only things that refused to open were the bottles. In fact it was found that the corkscrew was a deserter—absent without leave. This, with naval men present, was a first-class disaster, but one of them, afterwards an Admiral, made light of the difficulty, and anyone may imagine how we boys were thrilled when he seized a table-knife, caught a fat bottle round its waist and with a few well-directed taps on the neck, cracked the top, when out popped the cork! Aubrey was, even at three years old, very observant. When the three of us crawled into the stable through the fowl-hole, and the two elder boys had smashed several bottles of beer which refused to have their necks broken, he took up the knife and, imitating the naval lieutenant to the life, did the trick. It was indeed some trick. By the time the second bottle had been opened operations ceased, and at nine o'clock that night, after a search with the police all over the town, the old coloured cook, going into the stable for wood to make a cup of tea for two broken-hearted mothers, found the boys lying insensible north, east and west of the beer-case.

Aubrey does not come into my memory pictures, arrestingly, after that, until he is seven or eight years old, when at the 'Woolsack' he was tossed over the hedge by a cow and received the mark in the middle of his fore-



THE WOOLSACK

head which showed all his life. I could write a great deal about this cow and the figure Aubrey cut in his first attempt at bull-fighting, but I must hurry on to higher subjects than a toss up into the air. Quite possibly there may have been an inward and spiritual mark left upon his character as well as upon his forehead. For after all a cow is a big and fearsome object, and by getting the right side of the hedge from it he had virtually vanquished it.

The 'Woolsack' was a large, roomy, thatch-roofed house hidden away in great forests, now no longer existent, on the eastern slope of the Devil's Peak, with a Dutch farm on its lower left, and another at its foot spreading over what is now the village of Rosebank. Aubrey's father rented the 'Woolsack' from the owner of the bottom farm. When it was built, and why, is now unknown. But it was a miniature farm and had four large orchards surrounding it. In these grew all manner of fruits, as in the Garden of Eden. Each kind of fruit was multiplied in its number of trees. There were twenty-four apricot trees in one orchard, with some dozen peach trees and pear trees. Twenty fig trees of various kinds in another. Medlars, plums and apples, almonds, rose-apples, guavas, and so on in the others. The avenue leading up to the house was lined with sixteen loquat trees. It may therefore be imagined, as none of the fruit was sold, what a paradise the place was for young boys with large appetites. Each member of the family, which in the earlier period included a grandmother and two aunts, possessed his or her own fruit trees, and the law was rigidly kept—when the fruit was getting ripe. Complaints, of course, were made by

grandmother who was an unreasonable person and a very poor tree climber, that the fruit on her trees, especially the loquat tree, was being picked by someone not herself, and she used to look hard at each of the boys, but what would you, if there was no proof; and Aubrey being then small and active would say: 'But Grandmamma, I saw you picking some loquats off Mother's tree,' when there would be an indignant outburst, and the original complaint be lost in what scripture calls a multiplicity of words. Vitamins were unheard of in those days, but looking back on the staple of food for boys at the 'Wool-sack' in the 'sixties, one understands now that the trio owed not a little of their stamina to the Garden of Eden diet on which they lived. Medlars and winter pears were laid in stock in straw in the loft of one of the outhouses, and there were not more than three months in the year when the boys came down to their regular meals with what was then considered a decent appetite. Of course there were exceptions. One aunt, who had married what would now be called 'the Surgeon-General' of the Madras Army, came, upon widowhood, well-endowed, to live at Cape Town, and sometimes she introduced good things at the table, which rather put fruit in the shade. There were still to be seen three figures, however, like silent monkeys, busy amid the branches of their rather tall loquat trees, but only super-fruit was then eaten.

She was a fairy-godmother, that aunt, and if an unexpected bonus came from India, her humour would be to spend it as soon as possible in light-hearted extravagance, grandmother in vain begging her to put some of it away. The good fairy knew that she could rely on the boys to enter into her schemes, and soon one of them, perhaps

Aubrey, would be running down the long avenue to the landlord who had a house at Kalk Bay, to know if she could rent the 'cottage,' his Dutch name for the place, for a month.

Then, if secured, there would be packing, sending to livery stables for carriages and luggage cart and the whole family would then migrate to the sea-side, grandmother giving in with a sigh, but as eager as anyone to enjoy the extravagances she had forbidden.

Aubrey in after years, when recovering from wounds, would always return to Kalk Bay to recuperate. It held for him some of the pleasantest memories in his life. To boys it was the sea—no one can say more than that. It was the only place where extravagance seemed justified, and the good fairy saw to it that all lived well. The trio lived an intensely active life on the rocks, on the mountain, swimming, climbing, walking. On one occasion only were the police called on to search for them—in memory of the Cape Town incident. They had walked to an outlandish place called the Kommetje, on the Atlantic side, and only arrived home weary, but robust, at nine o'clock at night, when again two loving mothers were distracted, thinking they had been drowned, somewhere, fishing. This, of course, they pooh-poohed in manly fashion. It was their way to laugh at danger; indeed it was considered babyish to funk any enterprise, from the earliest age. When two more brothers arrived to swell the family tally (one three and the other four and a half) the elder shed tears after a severe fall, upon which three years said: 'Man, you are a baby.' This saying was engraved amongst the traditions of the trio.

Aubrey learnt to swim at an early age. At Kalk Bay there was a bathing-place at the old school-room which was also used as a church. There were no bathing-boxes in those days and everyone undressed and dressed, with the innocence of Adam, on the sandy shore. After a South-easter wind there was often a strong current running out to sea, when bathing became dangerous to all but strong swimmers. One day years later Aubrey was dressing in the old-fashioned way and watching a rather anaemic figure of a youth in the water. Suddenly the youth threw up his hands and shouted for help. Aubrey, who was then fully dressed, at once ran into the water, clothes and all, but he had barely splashed down to swim to the assistance of the drowning man, when the latter, standing up in a shallow patch of water, said: 'I am all right now, thank you.' Aubrey glared at the stranger as only he could glare when angry, and what he said can probably be imagined by any ex-trooper of the Imperial Light Horse.

It is curious to look back on the bathing ideas of those times. The men had their bathing hours from six to eight o'clock, the women theirs from eleven to one. Everyone obeyed this 'law'. The males disported themselves in an open bay, the women in a pool surrounded by high rocks. Some years later when the latter, who could not swim, adventured into the men's domain, that early significant movement of feminine push, five were carried out by the current and two drowned (also an incident of some significance).

Pyjamas and bathing-suits were unknown then. There was a tale told of a little, shy shopkeeper who shrank from exhibiting his anatomy even to men, and

sought out a sequestered spot along the shore among some high rocks for his daring. Unfortunately he chose the place frequented for bathing by a stout, middle-aged Dutch woman. Coming out of the water one morning round a rock he almost collided with her. Vainly he called upon the rocks to hide him! The Dutch lady had more *savoir-faire*. Although in Nature's garb herself, she only said in a natural voice, 'Dag, Mr. Smith' ('Good-day, Mr. Smith'), and passed on.

Aubrey first introduced pyjamas (then spelt ptjamas until the hosiers corrupted the word), when, after being wounded in the first Boer War, he came to Kalk Bay to recuperate. He had learnt the use of them from the military at Pretoria. Even in 1882, when I first went on circuit with the Bar of the Supreme Court, I was the only one who had a pyjama suit. The usual beneficent night-shirt still held sway with the other men.

After one of these periodic visits to Kalk Bay, the trio was broken up by the cousin being sent to England to school. We only saw him once again on his way to India, and now he also is dead. Whenever I recall his high-spirited presence it is always in association with the old forests about the 'Woolsack', and they too, like him, have passed away and only now have their existence in the dreams of an expiring generation.

The pair of brothers were now left to their own devices. We still made loquat jam in the old kitchen, insisting with the cook that our pot should simmer in a good place; we still turned out *mebos* by drying salted apricots spread out flat on the iron roof of the coach-house; or collected fruit on the mountain from the protea bushes to boil up into golden syrup.

Grandmamma still sat at the head of the table—a stout old lady with strong features and a stern eye, and yet there hung a painting of her in the drawing-room as a slim, sloping-shouldered beauty, with fair hair and long curls, in the costume of the time of George IV. We boys could hardly believe she had really ever looked like that, with puffed sleeves, low-cut bodice, wasp-like waist and pointed stomacher! We waged constant warfare with her; and not a little of the harmony of that household was disturbed by the defence by two mothers of their silent, but deeply conscious offspring against some too well-grounded accusation made by the old lady. Some of her complaints were not unreasonable. She had a quantity of silver made of Spanish doubloons inherited by her from forbears connected with the East India Company, and containing perhaps some romantic history. We ate daily with spoons and forks worn so thin with long use that one had to be careful with them. The fact that they were precious was lost on us through daily contact, and sometimes we would take a table-spoon out of the drawer of a Dutch sideboard in the dining-room and proceed outside to make tomlachje (a kind of toffee) in it—that is, we would fill the spoon with brown sugar and hold it over a fire until the sugar cooked, when we would pour the syrup into a paper with raised edges, drop several of the sweet kernels of fir-cone pips into it, and let it harden. This process was undoubtedly bad for the silver spoon and caused trouble. Aubrey was rather good at tomlachje.

He was at this time a much-freckled boy with brownish-red hair, oval face, and rather large expressive eyes. But he was most untidy in his dress; in fact his

nick-name at that time was Moss Gough, after a farmer on the Cape Flats celebrated for his unkempt appearance and shapeless clothes. He wore knickerbockers, and his stockings and boots were always in a deplorable state. As a man, he became impeccable in dress—one of his very few changes of habit. There was another habit of his which was—if not to change—at least to change its form. It is absurd to say of a baby boy clinging to its mother's breast that when it grows up it may become a lady-killer; it has begun already. There is only a change in the form of the habit when the boy puts on trousers and begins to blush. Nowadays a book which takes no account of these mysteries—which fails to make play with the sex-complex—can only scuffle along the ground like a bird with one wing. Still the General needs must where the Judge drives, and so, suffice it for us to say, once for all, that Aubrey Woolls-Sampson had a great way with the ladies and that they were generally inclined to go a great way with him.

Looking back now I can see that we enjoyed considerable natural advantages as boys in the free open lives we led in the ramshackle and spacious old house with its picturesque surroundings. There was lots of room. An outhouse with an earthen floor was given to us for our rabbits, which made burrows and, in due course, brought out their blue or grey young to our intense joy. Our pigeon-house was built for the express purpose, with rows of bricked pigeon-holes in which the birds nested, and we often sat in a corner of the room intently watching their love-making or their fighting.

Save for meals and compulsory lessons for an hour or two a day our parents saw little of us. Brought up in the

country, far away in those days from Cape Town, we had no town knowledge, few companions at first, and only the charms of South African wild life and its flora to engage our alert attention.

It may be understood then that, as a boy, Woolls-Sampson had graduated in a school well fitted to equip him for his future life in South Africa. From his seventh to his fourteenth year he had lived at the foot of the Devil's Peak, that giant spur of Table Mountain towering above Rondebosch near Cape Town. In these forests and on the slopes of the steep mountain he had gained the muscle and hardness which stood him in such good stead in after years in the Transvaal and Rhodesia. Woolls-Sampson and his brother, Victor Sampson, had in fact become the adopted children of the mountains, the wild woods and the sea. The Union of South Africa contains so many startling contrasts of climate and country that no one district can supply a training ground for them all. The climate, for instance, of the whole of Cape Colony is proverbially just as near as may be to that of old England with half the rain and twice the sun; but as to the veld, nothing could less resemble the Karroo-bush which lies to the northwards than the immediate surroundings of the home of the Sampson family. The loose red sand, the sprinkling of scrubby thorn bushes, the kopjes of big boulders with prickly-pear bushes growing out of their crevices; the karroo-bush itself, with half-starved white milk bushes, is entirely foreign to the moister and more luxurious vegetation of the Cape. Then again, the high veld of the Orange River Colony, as it was then, and the Transvaal; those vast undulating open stretches which became more familiar to many tens of thousands

of British soldiers than their own native land owing to three years of persistent trek, foot-slogging or galloping—where the ant-vaark digs its sly pitfall for the collar-bones of the careless and the assvogels glide in immense circles overhead longing to pick his bones—they are like nothing else on earth. Yet what a magic—what a fascination—in those interminable battlefields, emerald green in summer, topaz yellow in winter. The oxen and the wagons—those are the vehicles I dream about when I sit sadly in a blue express whirling off to the artificially concocted enjoyments of the Riviera. There is a favourite fox-trot in vogue at this moment—'The horses—the King's horses—and the King's men,'—something like that it seems to run in my head. But I long sometimes for a change back to old times and to see 'The oxen, the creaking wagons—and the Dutchmen.' The wagons! Not much *wagon lit* about them!!! That march from Newcastle to Amajuba in February 1881 when I trekked on foot in my kilt and, loaded up with claymore, revolver and three days' rations, all through the night in charge of fifty wagons and the oxen—the oxen. What a night! How I sweated, how they strained and pulled; how the voorlooper yelled and the fifty drivers cracked their fifty whips; and then next morning, when the outline of Imquela mountain caught fire from the rising sun, so dead beat that at every hold-up whilst crossing a drift I dropped down into the dust and fell asleep in a second, taking only the precaution of putting myself so that whenever the oxen did take it into their heads to move they were bound to kick me up again. Well, for that particular sort of entertainment the Sampsons' farm may not have given to the boys all the experiences they would

need if they ever took the field on the veld but it went as near to it as any boy's homestead could have done. In the mountains were caves and deeply cleft ravines. The old Dutch house itself, with its lofts, its orchards and its outhouses, was packed with every sort of possibility of wild make-believe for a couple of harum-scarum young rascals. Hard by, too, was the Liesbeek river and at the seaside village of Kalk Bay the sea, not tamed and put tidy by piers, esplanades, and white men masquerading as nigger minstrels, but the real thing, wild waves, baracuta¹ fish that would bite your hand off, and genuine Hottentots, Cape boys and Kaffirs. There was a store of dangerous enjoyments always ready waiting for the young and very little supervised pair of adventurers. Early and late the brothers were out and about. Each place held for them some very precious secret. There was always some distant spot to visit; we trailed (says the Judge) like pigmies through great forest aisles, or climbed the rocks of the perpendicular Peak—perhaps to do no more than pick some rare flower which to our knowledge grew in a lonely spot. Rain or heat made no difference to us. Parched with thirst a long way from water on the hottest day in the year, we would toil to our distant objective as best we could; or, so drenched with rain that the water squelched from our boots, we would plod on, saved from chill in meagre clothing by movement. I doubt if there was a square yard of that tall mountain side, with its beautiful silver-trees, its flowering protea bushes, its blackberries, chestnuts and numerous South African wild flowers, which we did not at one time or another tread and know.

¹This is not the Judge speaking.

With the coming of the books of Fenimore Cooper, which we read surreptitiously far into the night by the light of forbidden candles in an upstairs room far removed from the rest of the family, a new occupation engaged our daytime activities. On the fir-needle floor of the lonely forest we carried out our imitations of the Red Indians, learning to tread as noiselessly as they did, moving no twig and leaving no footmark. Wigwams became the order of the day. Choosing trees grown together in a circle, we piled up armfuls of fir needles in the spaces between them to make the walls, and thatched the top with the same material on crossed saplings resting on the angle of branches of the trees. Through a hole in the wall we crept joyously into our dark retreat on the wettest, most monotonous of days, and sitting round a small fire, half choked with smoke, munched roasted chestnuts, quinces, or whatever fruit was in season. Abroad we became trappers. Rat-traps were all we could muster for rock-rabbits, but as a side sport we took up spooring, especially of the grey buck (grijsbok), a diminutive antelope whose dainty footmarks on the dry or moist ground led us after a long hunt to his lair. To put him up was to succeed as a tracker—and good eyesight was required for the work.

Bird watching was another of our pleasures. To find the nest and see the eggs of the shyest species was a great joy. In course of time we learnt the habits of most of the birds of the Peninsula and could tell by their behaviour whether a person, a snake, or a wild cat were in their vicinity. We became experts in forest and bush craft.

Then Sam the Zulu appeared on the scene. He was

hired to look after, among other things, the cows and milk them. The animals often got lost among the thickets of the forest, especially in very wet weather, and we were as quick as he was in tracking them. But Sam's fascination for us lay in his ability to find a bee-nest on the mountain by watching the flight of the bees in the air. He would stand, well-built and powerful man that he was, with his glistening eyes fixed on something in the air, suddenly move farther on, stare again while we watched, and then ejaculate, 'There he is', and point to a spot on the ground, where we could see on approaching nearer the issuing and returning of bees from and to their hive, in a hole in the ground or under a rock. His method was first to determine the line of several bees' flight from some mass of flowers where they had gathered their sweet cargo, then follow up one bee after another until he arrived at the nest.

Once he obtained a bucket of honey from a large hive under a rock on the brink of a precipice. The bees attacked him on all sides until we feared he might lose his foothold in brushing them off. But not he. Advancing with fresh smoke obtained from burning rags which we handed him, he eventually managed to get all the comb worth having, beautifully sealed and looking like frosted amber.

Nothing speaks more for the translucence of the South African air than the aid it lends to the honey-hunter who is thus enabled to watch the flight of a bee for so long a distance. After much practice and many failures we eventually learnt to find bee-nests for ourselves after Sam had left. It was good sport, calling for keen vision and patience.

If the hive was a large one and the bee of a long body—the best honey-makers—we captured the Queen bee and took the swarm home. To prevent the bees leaving the hive into which we put them, we usually made a cage for the Queen out of two round pieces cut from a cork, and transfixed with pins set far enough apart to allow the bees to feed her, but not sufficiently wide to allow her to escape. When the swarm began to make comb their sovereign was liberated to them from the suspended cage. A fresh swarm sooner or later took up its abode in the hole or rock from which we had taken the previous one, and these holes we visited from time to time, memorizing the place hidden often in the thickest bush.

To these many happy hours spent by Woolls-Sampson in bee-hunting may be put down his keen vision and that marvellous topographical sense or instinct which was to excite the wonder of so many Generals and Staff Officers in after years: and small wonder, for did not the lives of their men and their own careers also hang upon his guidance during the seven or eight hours' forced march through the night?

Sam would often vary his talk about birds and bees, snakes and wild animals, with blood-curdling stories of his king's power, his army, his distinctive regiments, and the ease with which he could drive the white man into the sea. Some years afterwards, when my brother verified these statements, he told me on a visit to Cape Town that if England ever went to war with the Zulus the result would be terrible. His fears proved, as we know, to be true, and he himself took part in the war. I

often wonder whether Greek met Greek and whether the redoubtable Sam ever hurled an assagai at the pupil who owed so much to his instruction.

In those early days Woolls-Sampson imbibed Dutch like mother's milk from the talk of the servants and hired men. The house he lived in adjoined a fine farm owned by a Dutch family with whom he became intimate. Playing with the boys about the farm he absorbed without seeking it all kinds of farm knowledge and an insight into Dutch life and character.

Treasure hunting was another of his boyish diversions, if anything could be called a diversion which we took up in so earnest a spirit. At a place called Silver Mines near Kalk Bay a legend ran and probably runs still that silver had once been found. He and I searched the mountain, the rocks and the caves, for any speck of the white metal whenever chance took us that way, filled with all sorts of imaginings as to what would happen if we happily found that the mountain was quick with the silver. At home, at the 'Woolsack', there was a legend that Governor Janssens, when the Cape was attacked in 1806, had buried stacks of money somewhere on the Devil's Peak, and we often searched for it in the little caves on the Cape Town side of the highest block house. We seemed to find nothing but the dust of bats; actually we were collecting treasure galore—thrill after thrill of excitement knocking Monte Carlo into a cocked hat, as from moment to moment we kept on thinking that next moment would turn us into millionaires. In his effort many years afterwards to find the wreck of the *Grosvenor* on the Pondoland coast, Woolls-Sampson no doubt revived, but possibly not so

keenly, the excitement he had experienced as a boy digging in the caves of the Devil's Peak.

There was also romance for him in the old cannon lying about the rampart of the block house, guns with the date of a past century upon them, cast aside and forgotten. The mountain wind blew through the roofless fort with its thick stone walls and open powder magazine, heightening with its spooklike moaning the strange witchery of the place. There was an atmosphere of departed energy and purpose about the ruin which he felt again when in Rhodesia he discovered an ancient fort at a gold-mining centre with the miners' tools and crucibles lying as they had been left in some prehistoric age.

Taught at home to read and write, he was sent at the age of eleven, then a sturdy boy, to a private school at Cape Town. By English scholastic standards this was rather late. But he did not suffer by not having begun roughing it with other boys at an earlier age. He was never at any time effeminate or defective in self-assertion when self-assertion seemed to him to be called for. At school he was once wrongly accused of some misdeed in class and was told by the Principal to remain behind after hours for a caning. To the amazement of the Head and the whole school, he suddenly stood up, his eyes blazing, and said: 'I did not do it, and I will not allow you to cane me.' He looked so fierce (I was present) that the Principal said rather confusedly: 'Well, if you did not do it, you are excused, but you will write a hundred lines for your demeanour.'

He never wrote those lines, nor were they ever required of him.

Long afterwards, during the course of the Boer War, another 'Principal', a General to wit, tried to saddle Woolls-Sampson with the full blame for 'a regrettable incident' in which he had only done his best to counteract at any cost the hopelessness of the higher direction. Again, copying his grandfather's spirit of independence which would sooner be broken than accept a slur which he felt he did not deserve, he at once demanded a Court Martial. Again the 'Principal' rather confusedly agreed that after all a Court Martial had better not take place.

At the age of fourteen he was allowed, to his great joy, to accompany his father on his return to the Diamond Fields. According to the accepted canons of upper-class Anglo-Saxondom no boy could have made a more disastrous start in life. Half-educated, with no definite calling in view, to be thrown into the vortex of an existence at a South African edition of Bunyan's *Vanity Fair* was hardly fair play. The so-called 'Diggings' were a pretty hot place as regards drink, gambling and bad women, and Aubrey was to be in sole charge of a father who was far too easy-going to keep an eye or a grip upon his conduct! The betting seemed to be about 500 to 1 that the word 'waster' would have to serve him as an epitaph. Who could have foreseen young Woolls-Sampson picking a shining K.C.B. out of this dump of evil communications? He had in his scrip no more than the inheritance and the natural training which have been narrated. But his future lay in his reserves of inherited character and in the gradual unfolding of these lies the human interest of his story.

The Diamond Fields in those days was one of the worst schools imaginable for a weakling. Adventurers

of all sorts, but most of them in the bad sense of that fine word, the uneducated; failures, bankrupts, the dregs of the towns and the ne'er-do-weels of the country, had swarmed to the fields in the hope of picking up a diamond or, in default of that, of picking some comrade's pocket. Naturally, there were a modicum of good, decent people among them and sometimes even cultured waifs and strays: take them as they were, the 'Diggings' held out to the young 'Digger' who had no one to keep a close eye upon him, a very large choice of ways and means for digging the grave of all his aspirations. Drinking, gambling and illicit diamond buying (known as I.D.B.) were habits as forward in pressing themselves upon the newcomer as were the ladies of easy virtue and almost every colour of the rainbow. There were no facilities for the practice of the ordinary decencies of life, and so, as a rule, they were scrapped; so much so that roughing it on the veld was a clean affair to roughing it in the ramshackle streets of this upstart town. On the other hand, there was no school in which a boy of strong character could learn more of life—its necessities, comedies and tragedies; its trials, competition, temptations and dangers; its kindness and brutality. On every side the young adventurer could see living object-lessons, startling examples of the helplessness of those who lacked the armour of self-reliance and the sword of pride of race. Here it was that Cecil Rhodes working at his soda-water manufactory and Woolls-Sampson toiling in a diamond claim not his own acquired that knowledge of men which was to serve them in such stead in after life. They belonged to the survivors of the ordeal of the Fields, and they survived, not because of their

youth but because of their stamina. On both of them, it may be of interest to note, one result of their rough experiences was identical—Rhodes went to Oxford as soon as he could to further his education; and Woolls-Sampson, for the same reason, became a great and omnivorous reader. They both looked forward and had ambition. The boy had little to help him in those days—it is really pathetic to think of any good-looking lad flung into that shoddy South African Vanity Fair without a soul to lend him a helping hand. His father, busily engaged upon other people's affairs, soon left him to his own devices, arguing with great ability in the Land Court, forming one of the triumvirate to govern a Republic in an outlying Digging, and yet, perhaps, proving himself his son's best friend by throwing him out of the family lifeboat and leaving him to sink or swim.¹ Few parents would care to take so big a risk, yet the case of Woolls-Sampson is there to prove that sometimes it does succeed. How long the boy went on hauling, delving, or sifting at the Fields is not precisely known. There were few letters from him at that time. What he underwent he kept to himself. That he repented of his adventure is unbelievable; he was too much bent on being his own master; and hardship, after his Spartan upbringing, had no terrors for him. He could sleep sound and soft upon the hard bare earth, as he had often to do in his military career: hunger and thirst for long hours at a stretch were nothing to worry over; he had

¹Cecil Rhodes once said to me (the Judge), looking at my three boys, 'Give them a sound education and then kick all the props away. If they are worth anything the struggle will make them better men; if they are not, the sooner they go under the better for the world.'

tried them upon the Devil's Peak and, for the rest, so long as man and nature were there to interest his mind, luxury or soft living was so much dirt to him. Life at the Diamond Fields could, therefore, only have hardened him the more, rendering him the more fit for the trials and pains which he was to undergo in the future; if also, no doubt, rendering him less accessible to sympathy with the woes of weaker vessels who had not had the advantage of his disadvantages. Some of his adventures there he recounted years afterwards, interspersed with many humorous stories of incidents which befell him or came under his notice, for he had an eye for the oddities of human nature and, underneath his usual mask of silence, was really a born raconteur. One of his adventures was not humorous.

The boy had been sent out alone, by what hard employer is not known, to search in the desolate country around for some strayed horses. Those who know the Karroo and the upland country about Kimberley will remember that it is a land of ten thousand hills, each one like the other, with similar plains in between, bearing no sign to the eye of civilized man which might mark the difference between them. After a day's search Aubrey lost himself in that wilderness of similarity, and in trying to find his way back to the little pinhole of a digging in that hay-field of mountains and flats only wandered farther away from it. At the end of the second day, having used up all his water and food, suddenly there came to him from far away through the crystal clear air the raucous cry of a blue Kaffir crane. He knew that where the crane was there would be water. He set off in the direction, but it grew dark before he reached what

seemed to him to be the place where the cry, not repeated, had come from. He could find nothing. Nothing! In a sort of despair he threw up his arms and let go the loudest shout he could, without set purpose, just out of sheer emotion. To his utter surprise an answering shout came to him from somewhere below. He shouted again saying that he had lost himself, whereupon another shout came out of the lower darkness, telling him to remain where he was, as there was a precipice beneath him and that the person speaking would come and lead him down. He had wandered to a great ravine at the bottom of which was a small stream of water. After what seemed an age he heard the sound of hoofs and then a horseman emerged from the night, drew rein at his side, and told him that he had only shouted in the very nick of time as the Police Patrol, of which his helper was one, was saddling up to trek away back to Kimberley as soon as the moon rose! In telling the story he used to add with much *empressement* that, from that day onwards, he had never shot a blue crane.

His next adventure was one more to his liking. The Diamond Fields in the mid-'seventies had grown into a large community. Griqualand West, as the new territory was now called, became a Crown Colony separate from the Cape, ruled over by a Lieutenant-Governor and an Executive Council. Sir Richard Southey, late Colonial Secretary at Cape Town for many years before responsible government had been granted to the Cape Colony, was appointed the Governor and with the aid of his even more bureaucratic Secretary attempted to bring law and order into the motley assembly of diggers by

means of stringent measures not always conceived in the wisest spirit.

Protest and angry denunciation followed; and the more obdurate the Governor and his Secretary, the more widespread became the discontent. It burst at last into open rebellion fanned by the declamations of one, Aylward, a noted Fenian. Woolls-Sampson at once joined the movement—a miniature of the greater Reform Movement years later in the Transvaal—and entered heart and soul into it. Someone doubted the grit of the young recruit. The Irishman, who had taken the boy's measure, laid a bet with another person that he would not be able to shake Woolls-Sampson's resolution. The bet was taken and a plan made by which it was agreed that the fidelity of the young recruit should be tested. The conspirator who had questioned the staunchness of Aubrey's convictions was to go to him by night and say that the rebellion had collapsed as troops were coming up from Cape Town, that the principal men had already been arrested but that, if he would give up his gun, he would be pardoned. The boy, when this was put to him, simply asked whether Aylward had been arrested. On being told that he had, he said, 'All right, then arrest me, also; I will not give up my gun'.

Aylward, immensely pleased with the answer, won his bet, but happily fighting did not take place, an amicable arrangement between the parties, which involved a change in the bureaucracy, being arrived at; but the incident was an index finger to what was to happen twenty years later.

After this Woolls-Sampson settled down for a short time to the life at the Fields. He learned to speak

Kaffir, made many friends among Dutch and English, and grew in mind and body.

In 1873 he went with his father to Barberton, where gold had been discovered, and there began that intimate knowledge of the habits, language and mind of the Transvaal people, native as well as European, which was to be of so much use to him in his after life. He also went in for big-game hunting, and became an expert shot. In 1876 he paid a short visit to Cape Town. He had then grown into a striking-looking man, six feet in height; erect, with all his slovenliness gone, and in his helmet quite impressive. Together we went over all the old haunts, and it was then he told me the blue crane story. At this time also I gave him the knotted cane that became so famous in his after history. No Field Marshal's baton indeed was ever better known to an army than Woolls-Sampson's to the British Army in South Africa. And yet, for want of someone to put it into print, I daresay that in the British Army of to-day there are not more than a hundred persons who remember it! *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

We had gone to a small hairdresser's shop in Short-market Street in Cape Town where, looking round, I bought him a stick, just an ordinary stick, nothing more and nothing less, and he in return bought one for me. I lost mine a few years later, but neither of us dreamed what his stick was to see before the remnant of it was buried with him nearly fifty years later. On leaving Cape Town he returned to Barberton. Barberton was an exciting place enough to please anyone with a fancy for a dangerous existence in the year 1900, but in those far-off days life there may have been full of incident but

it must have been of a minor kind—too insignificant in fact, for Woolls-Sampson. He yearned for more stirring adventures, and with the war against Secocoeni, a powerful and recalcitrant chief in the Northern Transvaal, he found at once his chance, and his first campaign. Then only twenty-one, he joined Ferreria's Horse, a Captain under whom he was proud to serve, and of whom he speaks later on in terms of highest praise. Writing from Bovenplatz in May 1878 he speaks of himself thus: 'There is a turning point in the lives of all men, and I think my turn is coming at last. I have got a fair start, and if I do my duty and do not shirk in action I am almost certain to make a place for myself, and be able to help you all; but if I funk and show the white feather, you may be sure I will be disgraced and turned out of the troop. I have always wished to be a soldier, as you know, but it is rather ticklish for a young fellow of my age to command a troop, and have to lead them into action, with the knowledge that I have not been under fire before. Nevertheless I shall do my best.'

How interesting this letter will be to all those who knew Woolls-Sampson in later years, and to whom the idea of the white feather in connection with him would seem, but for his own handwriting, to be at the best a very poor attempt at a joke. That is assuredly the comment which would occur to most civilians. But to the soldier who has been through many wars and to whom many other soldiers have opened their minds, there is nothing really surprising in this *cri du cœur* from young Woolls-Sampson to his ain folk at hame at so grave a moment in his imaginative inner life—the moment, namely, when he is about to go under fire, not even with the

anonymity and comradeship which sustain the private soldier but with the responsibility of commanding a troop. How is he to know? He may think he knows his own temperament; he cannot know the unknown. Years afterwards Aubrey wrote feelingly of the sympathy which should be shown to the incalculable action of those who, for the first time, come under fire. He once told me—(his brother is speaking here)—of a man under him at Elandslaagte who seemed actually paralysed with fear, cowering on the ground while the bullets of the Boers were striking around, and whom he had literally to kick forward, when a bullet struck the soldier on the lip, and the man then jumped up, a new, raging being, shouting 'Let me get at them; let me get at them', and rushed forward careless of all danger.

The Secocoeni war dragged on for some time and, in its later stages was carried on under the direction of Sir Garnet Wolseley with whom Woolls-Sampson came into touch, the first British Commander of note under whom he had served. As usual a very alarming adventure befell him in this war, for there is no truer proverb than that of 'adventures to the adventurous'. The Chief had sent in a Boer prisoner taken by him named Ricker, and General Carrington (then commanding) wrote a letter (thanking Secocoeni for his act) which Woolls-Sampson and Commandant Dennison volunteered to read to the Chief whilst, at the same time, they sounded the feelings of the natives and tried to ascertain whether some basis of peace could not be arrived at. My brother and Dennison were at first welcomed by the tribe with every indication of good will, including beer and food, and were called the 'Messengers of Peace'; but when

they penetrated farther into the country on their journey towards Secocoeni's kraal, they found a different atmosphere and apparently a general determination to continue the war. Umsoet, an irreconcilable Chief, was at Secocoeni's kraal and strongly advocated that the two envoys should be put to death, or at any rate be detained as hostages until the end of the war. On Umsoet's advice they were tied to stakes and treated as spies. Whilst thus trussed up the women and children were let loose on them, and all sorts of ingenious tortures with long thorns, bits of stick and spear points were resorted to by these ladies for the indulgence of their merriment and hate. The weather was bitterly cold and the two had at first no food and no protection whatsoever from the women's assaults. The natives were on the first day seated in council near them and they had to listen, understanding the language, to the bloodthirsty suggestions made, as to how they had best be killed in the cruellest manner. This went on for some time, until one of the oldest counsellors pointed out that if they killed the prisoners, the white General would be so enraged that he would rush the kraal at all costs and probably shoot the lot of them. He, therefore, counselled an adjournment and further thought about the matter, having no doubt some wily scheme at the back of his wicked old head. This was agreed to, and the prisoners were left tied up until nightfall. They were then put into a guarded hut, given some coarse food, and kept there the whole of the next day, not knowing what at any moment might be their fate.

In the Book of Fate it had been written that amongst Secocoeni's men there was one who had been Woolls-

ANTI-COMMANDO

Sampson's servant at the Diamond Fields, and who was much attached to him for a kindness which was rather unusual towards natives at the Fields in those days. He managed to get into the hut on the second night, and hurriedly told his former master that it had been decided to send them back under escort the next morning, but that, at a certain hut on the road, they would be given a breakfast of poisoned goat's meat and then released. He strongly advised my brother to refuse any breakfast and escape as best he could. They had been given no food that night upon calculation, no doubt, that they would be all the hungrier in the morning. Next morning, sure enough, they were informed that it had been decided to release them and that they would be taken to a certain spot, given breakfast, and then let go. Woolls-Sampson and Dennison had their horses, but the armed guard were on foot, one man at the bridle on each side, so the progress, when at last they did start off, was slow. At length the party reached the hut where the Borgian feast was to be prepared. But Woolls-Sampson now explained that no good sportsman could eat with any appetite until he had watered his horse. The natives understood this and Woolls-Sampson and his comrade were accordingly allowed to ride their horses down to the stream, a man of the escort still at each bridle. When they reached the stream, Woolls-Sampson shouted 'Now, Dennison!' and putting spurs to his horse, broke away from his guard and raced with his companion through the drift and up the other side, the guards and all the escort firing and hurling assegais after them. Neither was hit, and they escaped. Had Woolls-Sampson run no greater trial than this, surely he might be held by



THE WILY OLD COUNSELLOR

Dutch as well as British to have gone through hell for South Africa? At the same time to some natures it is a fearful joy, yet none the less a real joy, thus for one half a moment to lift the lid off hell and peep into the superheated lounge for just as long as it takes to hurl an assegai. How little had Aubrey dreamed, when playing at Red Indians in the woods at the 'Woolsack', that it would fall to his lot one day to be tied to the stake by savages, and if not tortured in quite the atrocious fashion of the scalp-hunters, would yet have to undergo indignities and sharp pain at the hands of women and children. The same curious refinement of cruelty in making women the instruments of the torture seems to have been common both to the natives of North America and South Africa. Anyway, upon Woolls-Sampson this experience made an impression outlasting most of those many others with which his picturesque career was so crowded. Some time afterwards he met, out in the bush veld, a member of the escort who had fired on him, and recognized him. Riding up to him with all the scene of his capture and torture vivid in his memory he told him that his last day had come, and that when the sun, low in the sky, touched the hill yonder, he would shoot him. The man fell on his knees; Woolls-Sampson sat grim and determined, watching the sun, with the gun in his hands. Then he said to me, relating the story long afterwards, 'You know it was one of those beautiful sunsets such as we sometimes watched at the old "Woolsack"; there was the same peace, the same silence and the same rose sunlight on the distant hills. Quite suddenly, I felt that I could not do it, and I said to the man, "Get up and run for your life, I have

changed my mind". He ran', said Aubrey, and with a laugh added, 'he may be running still'.

In the long run the British forces captured Secocoeni after a battle in which Woolls-Sampson had the satisfaction of taking part. Unfortunately, he has left no account of it, and was more taken up in his letters with the fact that he had been promoted to be senior Captain in Ferreira's Horse. After the battle he had to patrol down the Oliphant's River in search of cattle, and this is his description of one of the delights of a native war. 'We proceeded on the most infernal patrol it has ever been my luck to accompany. The country through which we travelled resembled a number of Devil's Peaks more than anything else, except that the mountains were covered with dense thorn bush; through the above country we walked (for riding was out of the question) for two days and nights, halting every four hours to give the men rest—several of the men dropped off the road within a few miles of the camp (on the return) and had to be brought in . . . as for myself, never in the whole course of my existence have I felt so tired.' I put in this extract more because of the admission by my brother that he had felt tired than for any other reason, for it must have been a super-trek indeed that made him put down the word on paper.

No sooner was this stage of the Secocoeni War brought to a conclusion than Woolls-Sampson, too late luckily for Isandula, rushed off to take part in the last stages of the Zulu War. Lord Chelmsford must have been still in chief command when he arrived, but he seems to have fought with the column operating under Buller. As may be remembered by a few retired Major-

Generals, this was an occasion when luck turned heavily against the rising star of Sir Garnet Wolseley. The raging surf at Port Durnford prevented him landing; he had to go round by Durban; he thus lost six days, and missed the chance of a generation by being too late for the Commander-in-Chiefship at the victory of Ulundi—too late by four days! This taught a lesson to Sir George Colley, a close friend and follower of Wolseley's, on the advantage of winning your victory before your successor can arrive. But even texts from Scripture do not fit all contingencies, and this particular plan of getting there before your appointed successor can arrive was to cost the Empire that enormous disaster entitled Amajuba, for you have to be sure always that you do beat the enemy. Although we have neither of us any precise record of Woolls-Sampson's exploits in Zululand I tremble to think of the numbers of Zulus he scuppered. Other humbler personages shared in the great Wolseley's set-back. As will be seen further on, Woolls-Sampson and I were each destined to see service and to get wounded in the rapidly approaching Boer War of 1880-1881—he at Pretoria, I at Amajuba. Only by the cursed mischance of an over-zealous Assistant Adjutant-General to Sir Fred Roberts, by name Galbraith, was I prevented from landing with the newly created Knight Commander of the Star of India, Colonel Sir George Pomeroy Colley, on the 22nd July, and being in time at least to fire a few shots, gallop a few thousand miles, win the Zulu War medal, and very likely meet Woolls-Sampson. This heavy slip between cup and lip took place at Ali Khel in Afghanistan just after the treaty of Gundamak, signed in May 1879, had closed the first section of the 1878-

1881 Afghan War. The day after the treaty was signed leave of absence was opened to officers serving with units in Afghanistan. I was entitled to four months, so shot in my application at once to local Head Quarters on the Peiwar Kotal, and as I had been ill with fever and had not much improved my health by a duel I had been forced to fight with an old Mullah of the Shinwarris in a deodar forest, the leave was granted there and then. Then and there also I proceeded to put into execution a deep-laid plan I had conceived of proceeding to South Africa in the same ship as that by which Colley, Military Secretary to Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, was sailing on the 5th June from Karachi via Aden and Zanzibar to Natal, where he was to join Sir Garnet Wolseley. My berth was booked by wire; my good-byes were said to my brother officers, and I was actually starting to ride down the Kuram Valley when peremptory orders came from Simla that I was not to be allowed to proceed. Whatever happens to a man in later life it is at least something to be thankful for that he becomes by slow degrees incapable of feeling the full misery of so terrible a disappointment. This frustration of my longing to have assegais thrown at me, had been caused by the wicked Galbraith slyly pointing out to Higher Authority that if once I got clean away to Africa, I should be beyond the reach of recall within any reasonable period of time. Still; the old boy has been dead a long time now and I forgive him.

After the battle of Ulundi, Woolls-Sampson returned to the Transvaal and was appointed Clerk and Interpreter to Captain Sir Morison Barlow, Special Commissioner and Governor's Agent on the Swaziland

Border. Here he hoped to get an insight into official work, of which he knew little, with a view to qualifying for a Landrostship at some future time; but—just as he was getting up to his neck in the pursuit of this laudable ambition—the Basuto War broke out and the spirit moved him to apply for leave to serve. Leave was refused, but he was promised that if the war grew to any great dimensions he would be granted permission. Volunteers were soon after this called for to serve on the Pondo Border, but he did not apply, about the only temptation of a military kind which he ever resisted, and no doubt he only did so because he did not consider the proposition would pan out at anything more exciting than a mere watching precaution. Circumstances did not permit him to follow his official education under Sir Morison Barlow for very long. Soon that officer suggested Woolls-Sampson as the best Native Commissioner Sir Owen Lanyon could find for the Waterberg District, and much against his inclination he was not long after persuaded to accept the position. Sir Morison wrote to him: 'My opinion of your capabilities was endorsed by Sir Owen Lanyon and Mr. Shepstone, and so you were sent to the Waterberg.' As an instance of the kind of life he led at this time, and the progress the unlettered boy of the 'Woolsack' had made in the matter of lucid expression, I quote from a letter of his written in 1880 which exhibits among other things an insight into the growing hostility of the hitherto hospitable Boers to British rule in the Transvaal:

'On the 1st May last Sir Morison and I started from Derby in New Scotland for the purpose of collecting the taxes from the natives residing on the Northern Border

of the N.S. District. It was his intention to finish up with the Kaffirs in that portion of the district in eight or ten days, and he accordingly wrote to the Field Cornet advising him of his departure from Derby and requesting that the native inhabitants might be warned of his intention and be ready with their money. Imagine our surprise when, at his farm, Sir Morison was told by the Field Cornet, that not having received any official notification of the transfer of his ward from the Lydenburg district to that of New Scotland, he could not comply with his instructions. This at once put a stop to our collecting and necessitated immediate communication with Pretoria. As it would have taken little less than a month to get a reply to any official dispatch forwarded by the ordinary post, it was thought desirable to send a special messenger direct, and as one could neither be had for love or money, I volunteered my services, which were gladly accepted, and the next morning I started with Sir Morison's and my horse, both in good condition, and thoroughly up to that kind of work. I rode along quietly as, having made a bet that I would reach my destination in three days—170 miles—I was anxious to spare the horses as much as possible to commence with. I travelled about four miles, when turning round I saw unmistakable signs of snow, and had barely gone two farther, when it came down in real good earnest; twice I was forced to take refuge in the houses of some Dutch people living along the road, but their hospitality was offered in such an objectionable manner that I preferred the snow.

'I managed to get in to Pretoria all right at 8 p.m. When I presented myself next morning at the Colonial

Office, Mr. Shepstone, after reading the dispatches, offered me the Commissionership at Waterberg which, without any hesitation, I point-blank refused; in the afternoon it was a second time put before me, but I again expressed my unwillingness to accept an appointment which I doubted my ability to fill. When my second refusal was made known to H. E. he informed Mr. Shepstone that he was pleased with what I had said, and more than ever wished me to go to Waterberg. Of course after this was explained, I saw it was useless offering any further objections, and accordingly expressed my thanks for the appointment.'

The fact is that Woolls-Sampson was as honest as he was earnest and had that diffidence, natural to the untutored, which is akin not so much to timidity as to a dread that they may find themselves holding positions in which they might not be able to fulfil the expectations of their friends. This was the keynote of his character, in civil matters; in war, although the readers of this work have been admitted to the family circle, and have thus become aware of certain misgivings, it is a sure thing that none of his comrades ever suspected him of lack of self-confidence. In war he acted boldly, unhesitatingly: his one idea was to conquer, and then no danger was too great to be faced, no effort too long to be endured. The weak spot in his admirable outfit as a servant of the State was the same as that which has always haunted the ascending footsteps of great adventurers from Richard Cœur de Lion down to Lawrence of Arabia. As private soldiers nothing can stop them; as leaders of forces they do not make allowances enough for human weakness and demand more of their men than they can for very

long sustain. Writing of his brother Ivo's volunteering for the Basuto War, he said: "The very best thing for a fellow of his age (eighteen) is a year or two passed on a commando; the knocking about is sure to do him good, and the constant exposure to danger sharpens his wits, more than anything else. I sincerely hope he may distinguish himself in some way and get beyond the ranks before his return home.

'Any fellow who really makes up his mind can easily get on in a volunteer corps on active service. The great curse among volunteers is grumbling, which emanates from laziness, and I have noticed that the man who does his duty steadily and never grumbles, but complains in a legitimate manner to the Officer Commanding, when he has any real grievance, and makes a point of showing his willingness to accept any post of danger, and is ready to volunteer for any attack or patrol, is the one who receives the first vacancy.' Yes, exactly; but how many Cadets does any old General expect to find at Woolwich or Sandhurst who are at the same time fired with enthusiasm for danger, and will also be steady, abjure delights, and live laborious days through their precious 'teens and twenties? Perhaps every second year there might be one. Flash-in-the-pan gallantries he will find by the dozen; in every class he will discover one or two go-by-the-ground 'mugs', 'swats', or 'saps', but not the fanatical follower of fame.

Parting from Sir Morison, with keen regret on both sides, Aubrey Woolls-Sampson now took up his abode upon the Blue Mountain; almost one might write, took up his abode at the End of Everything. The Blueberg is the loftiest peak in the Waterberg district. Sixty miles

from the Limpopo it stood and lay farther north than the dwelling place of any other white man in the whole district. The country was beautiful, and splendid trees grew round about his new home, but the amusement a man can get out of a tree has its limits. My old comrade W.-S. began to feel himself as isolated from the stir and whirl of existence as any Siberian exile. The work itself he found easy, and in that no doubt lay some of his disillusion. However, danger and adventure were coming along with a vengeance; had he but known it he was only marking time during the lull that comes before the storm, just like all the inhabitants of the British Empire to-day. Towards the end of the year, the signs of an outbreak by the Boers became so evident that he determined to take the moneys he had collected from the natives to Pretoria, and he set out with a large sum in specie. Although no shot had yet been fired and the extraordinarily picturesque if also very tragic ambushade of a British regiment marching along with its women and children in wagons and the band playing at the head—the Lexington of the great South Africa of the future—was still to come; although Bronkhorst spruit was still running clear and undefiled by human blood; several Boer commandos were then already on the prowl, and as it became known to some of them that the Waterberg Commissioner was trekking with his cash to Pretoria they determined to hold him up. Woolls-Sampson, however, with that semi-supernatural instinct for country which was to befriend British columns when in later years he was, in his turn, to hunt Boer commandos, managed to give the go-by to all these trained hunters and trekkers of the veld. Each of these escapes would

furnish a chapter for a book on adventures; but alas! the detail has vanished and so also the witnesses who might have supplied some of it to the authors. All that is positively known is that he 'had some exciting adventures and narrow escapes by the way'. As he received the thanks of Government for his exploit it is probable that in ordinary circumstances something would have been put on to paper about these wayside games of hide-and-seek with the commandos, but, actually, the stir and turmoil of the next few months entirely drove them out of men's thoughts. He reached Pretoria only in the very nick of time. The Boers were up—the countryside was closing in on the towns. Woolls-Sampson was in his element. Necessity, that cruel angler, had caught him with its gilded spoon; had played him and tormented him until, exhausted, he had been landed and laid out upon the Blueberg. Now, with one leap, he found himself once more in his own element—War!

At once he joined up with a troop of horse Captain Nourse was raising for the campaign. Very soon afterwards Nourse became too ill to command in person, and so Woolls-Sampson took his place and led the Horse until he was so desperately wounded as hardly ever man has been who yet lived to tell the tale. There is something so romantic, so chivalrous, so desperate about this encounter between the commanders of the two commandos whilst their men found moments to spare from their own struggles to see how their chiefs were faring that it is already fairly well known both to English and Dutch in South Africa. But the boys and girls in the State schools of England, who are quite well up in the affairs of William Tell and Gessler or of Nelson's tele-

scope—pity there was no replica of invaluable instrument lent to the Dardanelles—they may be well versed in all these matters and yet have never heard of the duel between Hans Botha, leader of the Boer commando investing Pretoria and Aubrey Woolls-Sampson, leader of the South African-born British commando defending Pretoria. As they jumped off their horses and closed in the shots kept on whizzing nearer and nearer, each bullet crying out to each human target in tones more and more insistent, 'Take cover or die!—take cover or die!!' Moved by the same impulse both leaders side-stepped simultaneously behind a couple of friendly ant-hills which, impartial to British or Boer, stood about fifty yards apart on the veld. Each was a noted marksman, not so much at the bulls-eye of a target as with that combination of precision and celerity which will enable the hunter to bowl over a scurrying little duiker buck or a charging lion without looking through his sights. The moment a square inch or two of arm or shoulder was exposed snick went a bullet right through it. Under these conditions there was only one solution: the champions of England and Boerland must go on getting wounded until one got one bullet too many. The Great War of 1914-1918 in miniature in fact! So the duel went on. Each in turn believing he had killed his adversary, each in turn receiving a nasty wound for having prematurely and presumptuously so imagined the moment he raised himself a little to make sure.

In the course of this terrible and long-spun-out battle Woolls-Sampson eventually 'got it in the neck'. First he was wounded in the arm, next shot through the shoulder, and at last, not counting incisions by splinters

received a shot laying bare his jugular vein and disclosing the throbbing of his heart's blood up and down that flimsy tube—all that there was to prevent every drop of it being spilled upon the veld. Botha was in no better case. Evidently the normal characteristics of Boer and Briton had been reversed, and Woolls-Sampson had been the most slim of the two. For whereas his wounds were at his extremities all of Hans Botha's wounds were in the body, which had been pierced through and through seven times (believe it,—oh ye doctors,—or no as you like) by Woolls-Sampson's bullets. And, it must be remembered, the bullets of 1881 were much heavier than those of to-day. At Majuba the British fired bullets of .45 calibre; the Boers Westley Richards of .45, Sniders of .500, or even, some of them, elephant rifles. I must here express a hope that none of this present 1900 crowd will have to face elephant rifles. Bombs and Black Marias are bad enough—but elephant rifles do give you some wound! As the two champions sank into silence behind their ant-hills so their men gradually fell back and left the stricken field to the wounded. Then it was that Mr. Struben arrived on the scene and ordered Woolls-Sampson to the ambulance. He indignantly refused to go, and for many years afterwards reproached Struben for 'interfering'. Botha, also, was brought to the hospital and put into a bed next to his late antagonist. Now I ask Smuts and Hertzog and Denys Reitz and Lord Clarendon and all the rest of them, 'Could there be a better example of the idiocy of Dutch and English fighting when they have only to be popped into bed together to become the best of friends?' In due course, getting convalescent, they con-

demned each other in strong language, friendly and cheerful, for bad shooting, going over the instances when a fatal wound might have been given had the marksman seen straight. They remained friends for life; and sixteen years later when Woolls-Sampson was in prison at Pretoria with Karri Davies, no one besought Paul Kruger to release him more persistently than Hans Botha. Were proof needed that it is not the fighting but the writing that plays the mischief, here we have it. This is the story as it has been handed down to the writers of *Anti-Commando*; but there is a variant of it abroad which has gained some acceptance. Hans Botha and his commando were in laager, it is said, when Woolls-Sampson tried to gallop the wagons at the head of Nourse's Horse. The attack was repulsed, but Woolls-Sampson hung on to his ant-hill from which he commanded the inside of the laager. One by one the Boers slipped away, leaving at last only Hans Botha firing through the wheels of his wagon. The tale then follows the sequence already given.

Whichever account may be the more accurate, Pretoria was completely invested a short time afterwards, and in the last medical report which came through was an entry to the effect that Woolls-Sampson would not survive, as the film over his jugular vein could not be expected to hold. Indeed, the Civil Commissioner of Kimberley wired to me that he had heard just before Pretoria was finally hemmed in that Aubrey had died. We all went into mourning for him—all except his mother, who refused to believe that he was dead, and declared, putting all the force of his own strong character behind the assertion, that Aubrey would not allow him-

ANTI-COMMANDO

self to die at a moment so full of calls for him to carry on. The family and our friends treated this obsession as a pathetic instance of mother's love and his obituary notice appeared in due course in the *Cape Times*. Not until the retrocession had taken place did news come through that Aubrey was alive and kicking, and that the doctors attributed the persistence of the jugular film to the fact that he had no alcohol in his system. It may have been non-alcoholism; it may have been anger at the news of Majuba, but in any case it is true that Woolls-Sampson had seen too much of the ill-effects of liquor at the Diamond Fields and elsewhere to indulge in it, and had for years been an almost total abstainer. His general health at all times was exceedingly good. I do not remember in all his years to have heard of a single occasion on which he was laid up. He traversed malaria and fever districts without number and never met with an attack. As if to stop short of her gift of physical perfection, nature made him more than ordinarily subject to sea-sickness and, in after years, when he had to visit England in connection with the financial affairs of gold companies with which he was concerned, he all but died on the voyage, having on each occasion to be carried ashore in a precarious condition, utterly used up. However the film held; the flesh gradually grew over it, leaving him a scar as large as a shilling piece just below his collar as a souvenir for the rest of his life, and before the war was over he was looking forward to another shot at the enemy. But it was not to be. Gladstone not only anticipated by forty years the doctrine of self-determination but went one better than President Wilson's fourteen points. Careless of the fact that the



THE BURIAL OF THE OLD 92ND

Next morning it was found that an unknown hand had written on the tomb-stone 'Ninety-twa no deid yet'

Boers had so far beaten us, and would inevitably read our retirement as a final and shameful defeat of a great Imperial civilization by a few small commandos of mostly uneducated farmers, he swallowed the humiliation and handed back the Transvaal to the Boers as they still stood there victorious upon British soil.

No one in South Africa, it can be well understood, was more enraged than Woolls-Sampson at the astonishing turn given by British statesmen to South African development, excepting perhaps one other person—myself. The whole idea of entering with much drum-beating and trumpet-blowing into a fight, and of crying out 'I yield' at the second or third round, was violently opposed to his breeding, his up-bringing, and his own natural character. To chuck up the sponge because of an outpost affair, wherein under 400 men on either side had been engaged, seemed to him too utterly abject. His wounds tingled. He was one of the little group at Pretoria who, with a solemnity that reflected their feelings of national shame, buried the Union Jack which had floated over Pretoria outside the town at dead of night, an example followed by the Gordon Highlanders who buried an effigy of their old regimental traditions and number outside Newcastle also at dead of night. The more Woolls-Sampson brooded over the surrender, or retrocession as it was euphemistically called, the more his mind turned towards emigration to America so as to have done once for all with the nerveless rule of the new Britannia. Only after the greatest persuasion was he induced to remain on for a bit in South Africa and take his hand in the future destiny of what he still regarded as his own, his native land.

About this time Woolls-Sampson paid a second visit to Cape Town, staying there for some time to recuperate in the finest air anywhere—namely, that of Kalk Bay. Wandering over the beautiful flower-sprent mountains flanking and overhanging those blue waters, his habitual reserve seemed to relax and to let him recount his adventures, shooting expeditions and humorous experiences more freely than was his wont. To listen to his lighter experiences, interspersed as they were with grave remarks on the political outlook and the problems of South Africa, was a real treat, for when he did talk he could talk, and had some vital thoughts at the back of his words. Sad to relate, he and his mother were still at odds. She was quite out of sympathy with his military tendencies, believing that force was wrong. He, on the other hand, was positive that force was the only cure for disorder. They had many arguments over the matter and it would have been as easy for the nether millstone to melt the upper as for those two to come to a solution. She was for the civil life,¹ the statesman's, working for the good of all; he was for the soldier's, keeping things in order, by the sword if necessary. They both became heated, looking at each other with kindled eyes, not seeing in the one the image of the other.

Woolls-Sampson had by now recovered his habitual fitness, and when Sir Gordon Sprigg, in pursuance of his policy of disarming and overawing the natives, formed a foot regiment called the Cape Infantry for the protection of the frontier, he at once applied for a commission and obtained it without too much difficulty. The lack

¹When I was twenty she urged me to take up the study of Constitutional Law. She died at ninety-one, her mind keen to the last.

of keen competition for this billet will be understood by the civilized reader when he learns that the station to which he was posted consisted of nothing but a name. Certainly it had a name; a very fine name; Fort Donald it was called, but there it began and ended; there was no house; there was a tree and a spruit it is said, but if the garrison wanted anything stronger than a glass of water they had to trek from Fort Donald, on the borders of Pondoland, twenty-five miles into Kokstad. Life here was utterly uneventful. Like a monk in a monastery, Woolls-Sampson went through the daily observances of his Order and, taking military life in deadly earnest now that he had, as he thought, permanently adopted it, put his whole heart into that rather heartless thing, military routine, and held in firm check his propensities towards impatience or *wanderlust*. His old habit of bee-hunting gave him a certain distraction, and at other times he would tramp over miles of Pondoland, to Kokstad and Harding, to take part in some attempted social gathering, very small affairs indeed at that time, with always the St. John's River and the sea to lend him some of their own ever-changeful moods. At St. John's he, as was his way, at once escalated the guardian Mountain Gates and was thrilled to find that he could from their heights, on a clear day, see dark forms of terror poised motionless deep down under the surface of the flood. These were the great sharks that infested this inlet from the sea.

He read a great deal at this time, and began to study military science, for he had put his whole heart into the career he loved. The career, however, seemed to take a positive objection to him, for after about five years of

existence the Cape Infantry Regiment was disbanded and part of it incorporated in the Cape Mounted Rifles. Woolls-Sampson was offered a lieutenancy in this peaceful force but, fate and character intervening, he declined and returned to Barberton, where for the next four or five years he travelled about the Transvaal hunting, prospecting for gold, and perfecting that intimate knowledge of the country and its people which was to give light and guidance to many a befogged British commander later on. He had, however, no turn for money-making; none at all. I knew his views and feelings on this question very well. He did not despise money, but he despised the tricks, cowardices and meanesses by which money-making is sometimes accompanied. When it came to spending or lending, although no spendthrift or (what is usually still more fatal) lend-thrift, he would treat money as of no account at all compared with keeping clean hands and being able to advance the principles for which he stood. Anyway, at this time, when clean hands were none too common at Johannesburg, not one of his enemies (and he certainly had his fair share) had ever been able to detect so much as a suspicion of the itching palm upon the hands of Aubrey Woolls-Sampson.

The Cape Government now broke in upon his rather desultory life by selecting him to visit the Pondo Chief, Umquikela, on a diplomatic mission relating to the disorders in Western Pondoland. The country was in those days an independent native state of considerable size wedged in between the Cape Colony and Natal. Its ruler was extremely jealous of any interference with the barbarous customs of his people—dark as the worst

of any Central African tribes—and just as in England we used to pride ourselves on affording sanctuary to outlaws like Trotsky or Lenin or Victor Hugo until it was convenient to them to emerge again with a fresh stock of bombs, charged with dynamite or phrases as the case might be, so the Kaffir potentate tenderly welcomed the worst of cattle-thieves from the Cape Colony into his territory and was prepared to make it a *casus belli* if the police tried to follow them up. This on his part was, of course, idealism gone crazy. For did one of those pastoral Anarchists ever show a grain of gratitude to Western Pondoland afterwards? Not one grain! Did Trotsky and Co. to England? Minus several grains! A peaceful mission to such an idiot was more likely than not to end in the loss by the emissary of his head, not necessarily in debate! However, the Under Secretary for Native Affairs was so pleased with Woolls-Sampson's diplomatic methods that he wrote, 'I am directed to state that it is highly satisfactory to find from this report that Mr. Sampson would appear to have conducted a delicate and difficult matter with discretion, firmness and ability'; a confirmation, if any were required, of Sir Owen Lanyon's previous judgment of his capacity for native administration.

But Woolls-Sampson was on the look out for thrills of danger more direct and fearsome than those to be enjoyed by mere palavers and arguments with passionate and irresponsible savages. When the Matabele War broke out in Rhodesia and his friend Alan Wilson had been massacred on the Shangani River with his heroic little band in the forests, he at once, and as a mere matter of course, picked up his rifle and bandolier,

saddled his best horse, and trekked straight away northwards towards the fatal spot with one fixed thought at the back of his mind—to avenge his old comrade's death. Wilson and he had been hunting companions in the Transvaal and on one occasion he had been in the nick of time to rescue Wilson from death. That was in the year 1888. They had been on a shooting expedition to Koomati Poort at a place named Mahlane. This is the weird-looking country with its white-barked, ghastly-looking fever trees through which our troops marched in September 1900 in pursuit of the Boers defeated at Lydenberg.

After trekking for some days they decided to hunt separately in different directions in order to get a better selection of game. Woolls-Sampson went off and shot nothing more than a lion and some buck. Wilson took an opposite direction and in addition to the usual number of hunting natives had with him Woolls-Sampson's little Hottentot boy named Spellman. This boy had been with his master for a long time and on many hunting expeditions. He was a quaint little figure, dressed always, as the writer remembers him, in rough hunting clothes finished off with a neat pair of go-to-meeting Oxford shoes. His only fear was of hyenas, just as the other writer is more frightened of a wolf than of any other creature known. In the one case this unreasoning terror was implanted by a Swiss nurse who used to tell frightful tales of the *loup garou*, or ghost wolf which devours little boys; in the other, because when born his mother had consulted a witch-doctor as to his future, who, throwing the 'dollar', foretold that he would one day be eaten by hyenas. The mother in-

formed the boy of this as he grew up; hence the persistent superstitious fear. Wilson had encamped near a small river and there he and Spellman contracted the fever of the low country. The natives at once fled. The two were in a bad way. One night lions invaded the camp and killed a donkey. Wilson was too weak to pick up his rifle and had the rump of a lion against him and pushing him about while the beast gnawed the donkey which he had dragged to the very spot where the sick man was lying. Two days passed, and it was impossible for him to reach the place where he and Woolls-Sampson had agreed to meet. Spellman, when he felt he was dying, implored Wilson not to let the hyenas eat him. He died, and Wilson, too weak to stand, crawled to a sandy place and making a hole as deep as he could with his hands put little Spellman's body into it. Woolls-Sampson came on the third day looking for his companion and found him all but dead. When Wilson recovered sufficiently to speak he told Woolls-Sampson of Spellman's fate and where he had buried him. Aubrey went to the spot and found that the hyenas had dug up and eaten little Spellman.

Woolls-Sampson, therefore, had many ancient memories to take with him into the very forefront of the battle, and he would have been there beyond doubt and in at the death had there been any such sensational wind-up to the campaign. Unfortunately, from his point of view, there was not. The brave stand made by Wilson and his little band of heroes had so impressed the enemy that the Matabele king offered terms of peace before Woolls-Sampson had time to make his mark.

After peace was concluded, in 1894, he settled down

to prospecting, hunting and exploring in Rhodesia. He visited the ruins of Zimbabwe, and himself, with Doctor Sauer and Mr. Bradley, discovered thirty miles from Bulawayo a large, ruined fortification of ancient times, oval-shaped, with several layers of terraces all built of granite. It was 300 ft. in length, 300 ft. in breadth and 50 ft. high. A hundred yards away from it they found a small Arab fort which had evidently in its day been raided and burnt. The nature of the fortification showed that mining in those days must have been a perilous occupation and one exposed to unusual perils from surrounding peoples of alien race. In several round huts they found charred pottery, smelted beads, silver, copper utensils, gold ornaments, as well as a quantity of chains, beads and rings, showing how swift and sudden had been the fate which had overwhelmed the foreign diggers of those mysterious times. He and his friends also found fifteen ounces of alluvial gold as well as several nuggets weighing from one quarter to half an ounce, proving that there were alluvial fields and rich quartz reefs somewhere in the district, not as yet discovered, and that they had been the first, in all the past hundreds of years, to visit again the scene of that obliterating massacre. Woolls-Sampson now began to believe that Rhodesia would prove richer in gold than the Rand. In that, so far, he has been mistaken. 'You never know your luck!' But so far, the reef at Johannesburg, like the diamond mines at Kimberley, has had no equal elsewhere in the world. The even distribution of the gold is what makes it so successful, which is just what the Socialists claim would happen to the world if the whole of its gold were equally distributed through-

out. However, I myself always prefer my luck in lumps. I'd far sooner pan out a good big nugget once in five years than exist more securely upon share and share alike; the nugget is like a pinch of salt to the porridge of life: therefore, I prefer to believe that the future will yet lead to the discovery in Rhodesia, or elsewhere in South Africa, of goldfields as wonderful and as rich as any of those dreamed of by my old friend Woolls-Sampson. The lure of adventure into the wilds had now taken firm hold of him, and about this time he fitted out an expedition into the interior, with himself as the only white man. At the head of this South African caravan, oxen instead of camels, he plunged into the unknown country beyond the Zambesi, hunting and exploring, until his party ran short of water, and the natives suddenly became afraid that they might die in that • inhospitable, mysterious and unending no-man's-land peopled, so they persuaded themselves, mainly by lions, hyenas and—far the most alarming—with ghosts. They begged him to return; or they said they must leave him and go back without him. To go back was to die; the last water hole was too far off by now to reach. He knew this; anyway, he was not the man to give in to them. They were panic-stricken; however they packed up and stood before him determined. Seeing that to reason would be as useless as to threaten, he resorted to a play upon their superstitious fears. He pointed his stick at them, and said in a deep voice that his cane was a great 'medicine', and that it told him they would all die in the night if they left him. They had noticed his regard for the stick and the extraordinary care he took of it, placing it by his side or under his head whenever he lay down or

rested. But at the moment they were more afraid of the country than of the stick and, as an answer to his warning, turned and filed away, leaving him alone watching them go. Without them he was pretty helpless, so he remained at the spot, knowing their natures, and sure enough, when night came, he saw them come gliding back to the camp. He said nothing, and next day water was found not far away from where they had rested. Whether or no, as sometimes may happen, the happy ending to his own fable had impressed his own imagination, the fact remains that from about the time of this episode he began himself to have a kind of superstitious belief in the virtue of the cane as a protector against misfortune—wherever he might go and whatever danger he might encounter, so long as he had the stick with him he felt safe. His attachment to it began in time to be widely known, and in later days the thought of Woolls-Sampson invariably conjured up a vision of the stick as well. Burnham, the Scout, writing to him from California after the Raid to congratulate him on his stand against Paul Kruger, asked, 'Have you still got the little stick?' Yes, he had; and among his many adventures he certainly had occasion enough to test the virtues of his talisman.

Returning to Johannesburg after his explorations in Rhodesia, he fell in with the Reformers. The Rand was in a ferment. As in Kimberley in the early 'seventies, the long pent-up feelings of discontent with the rule of Paul Kruger and his advisers were fast coming to a head in organized rebellion. The grievances under which the Uitlanders, as the mining fraternity were called, suffered can best be read *in extenso* in Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's

book, *The Transvaal from Within*. The keen, enterprising, progressive community of the Rand saw no chance of remedying the evils which had arisen under the rule of a narrow Boer oligarchy, with a policy like that of Charles I. and an outlook as cynical as that of Walpole—they saw no chance, that is to say, unless they were allowed to participate in the legislature. Paul Kruger and his little nation, on the other hand, were as jealous as the early Romans of their citizenship, and feared the Greek gifts of intelligence and ideals possessed by the Uitlanders. If once the franchise were granted to the newcomers they foresaw power departing from their hands, and so they put their backs to the wall and stubbornly refused to recognize any plea for representation on a liberal scale. There were not wanting, however, men among the more enlightened of the Transvaalers who sympathized with the Uitlanders' desire for reform and who could be trusted to hold the reins of power with justice and fair treatment. The plan of the Reformers, therefore, took the shape of an attempted *coup d'état*, with a show of force if necessary, and with the objective of a change of Government under a liberal-minded Transvaaler as President. Into this scheme, which preserved the country as a republic and only aimed at an internal revolution, Rhodes entered, promising his protection if necessary. A Committee was formed in Johannesburg composed, among others, of all the leading men on the Rand. Arms began to be smuggled in and men to be mustered in Rhodesia. Into this hive of revolutionists strode Woolls-Sampson, and their doctrines were to him as grateful as the honey of the wild bees of the Devil's Peak. He had seen the

triumph of armed resistance in his early days at Kimberley, and force was his own remedy for political diseases. But he had also fought in the Boer War of 1881, as few of the Committee had fought; he could realize as a soldier realizes the character and strength of the Boers and the hold of Paul Kruger over them, and oh what a difference that made! When the gallant Penn Symons who was to fall in the very first battle was told in my presence at Maritzburg that the Boers were gathering again on Laing's Nek and that it was a pity they should be given time to hold the pass in strength, he replied, 'I wish every commando in the Transvaal was collected there in a bunch so that I could make one sweep of the lot of them'; when I remember the feelings of a survivor of Amajuba then—then I can place myself in the shoes of Woolls-Sampson when he heard the Committee men talk big about the Boers. Things being so, he was less interested in the debates between the leaders than in finding out exactly how many rifles they had at their command. He was not taking anyone's word for it and said he would go at once and see for himself. Leaving the Council Chamber and going to the guarded room where the arms were stored, he sought entry, but the young guard—a mere boy, one of the Jays of Grahamstown—demanded the countersign. Woolls-Sampson not troubling much about military etiquette at that time had not got it, and told the guard so. He was informed he could not enter until he gave it. Annoyed, he said the guard should know him; he was Captain Woolls-Sampson, one of the Committee. The boy said he cared nothing for who or what he might be, but that he d——d well should not enter unless he gave the coun-

tersign. 'Nonsense!' said Woolls-Sampson, and tried to push past him, only to feel the bayonet pressed against his breast. So he had to return crestfallen to the meeting and amid the loud laughter of his unfeeling co-conspirators obtained the countersign. Everyone strongly approved of the boy's action and, as a matter of fact, so did Woolls-Sampson.

But he was fairly flabbergasted when he saw how very few rifles had been collected. From a soldier's standpoint the preparations of these brainy, scheming magnates and would-be magnates were absolutely childish. The wildest stories were set afloat later (when the fiasco had taken place and the Committee were arrested) of large stores of arms buried about Johannesburg. Actually, there were not rifles available to arm more than the Committee themselves, plus a mere handful of their personal friends. Now Woolls-Sampson had no illusions about the surrender of Paul Kruger. He had seen Sir Theophilus Shepstone deceived by the apparent complaisance of the Boers towards annexation, as well as the forces collected by Paul Kruger to annul it, and he was convinced that Johannesburg had no conception of the loyalty of the back-veld Dutch to their President and his rule. If there was to be a revolution it would have to be carried through by a war in which Great Britain would possibly have to take a hand. At the present stage of preparation the high-falutin' ideas of the Committee were sheer fantastic madness. He spoke strongly and must have given pause to the movement because C. Leonard was sent down hurriedly to Rhodes to put the position before him with a view to delay. Woolls-Sampson was congratulating himself on having stayed any

immediate attempt at a *coup d'état* when the terrible news dropped like a thunderbolt into the Reformers' Council Chamber that Jameson, having cut the wires so as not to be stopped, was invading the Transvaal and already well on his way to join the Committee and their friends. The fat was then in the fire. The foolish tortoise had at last put out its head, as Paul Kruger had said it would, and the force with which he met Jameson's ill-fated expedition proved Woolls-Sampson's contention up to the hilt by turning the tortoise into a hare. Yes, there were frenzied men in Johannesburg, and fearful. My brother has told me that if they could have got hold of Jameson at that time, they would have shot him. Rhodes said pathetically but inadequately that Jameson had upset the apple-cart. If the apple-cart had been the world and the apples its nations he would not have been so far out.

Over the sequel there has been much dispute. The Reformers' contention, as they understood it, was put forward by Woolls-Sampson and Karri Davies in a letter to the Acting British Agent at Pretoria in July 1896, of which the following is an extract:

'Upon the arrival at Pretoria of the High Commissioner (Sir Hercules Robinson) Doctor Jameson's forces had surrendered and were prisoners of the Government of this State, and the High Commissioner thereupon, as his first act, informed the Reform Committee that the Government of this State demanded that they and their followers should lay down their arms as a condition precedent to the serious consideration and discussion of grievances. The High Commissioner further informed the Committee that unless they did comply with the re-

quest of the Government of the State, they would forfeit all sympathy from Her Majesty's Government and from British subjects throughout the world, as the lives of Doctor Jameson and his Officers were practically in the hands of the Committee, a statement which it now seems the High Commissioner was misled into making.

'In addition to the representations of the High Commissioner, Sir Jacobus de Wet, Her Majesty's Agent at Pretoria, was despatched by the High Commissioner to interview the Committee upon the subject of laying down their arms, and he gave the Committee to understand that by so doing their interests would be fully protected by Her Majesty's Government, and that the liberty of the members of the Reform Committee would not be in any way jeopardized.'

It is necessary to understand what Woolls-Sampson considered the position to be, in order to understand why he laid down his arms. It is also necessary to hear why he pleaded guilty in common with the other Reformers. The Reverend Brereton, Secretary of the Cape Colony deputation to President Kruger to obtain the release of Woolls-Sampson and Karri Davies, published a statement in which this occurs: 'When asked why they were not consistent all through and did not refuse to plead guilty, Mr. Sampson said it was distinctly understood between the State Attorney and the counsel for the defence, that upon the plea of guilty the bulk of the Reformers would be released and a nominal fine imposed upon the leaders, an essential condition of such sentence being that all should plead guilty.'

Of course the State Attorney could not bind the Court though, in honour, he might bind the Govern-

ment: but a good many of the Reformers did not understand this, and when the Judge sentenced four of the ringleaders to death, and the remaining fifty-nine to two years' imprisonment, a fine of £2,000 or one year's further imprisonment if the fine were not paid, and to deportation from the Transvaal for three years, the prisoners and the country at large were horror-stricken. In a day or two, however, the Government, observing the State Attorney's undertaking, though taking a curious view of what was nominal and what was a release, commuted the sentence to a fine of £25,000 each for the ringleaders and the payment of £2,000 by each of the rank and file if they accepted the remission and paid.

No promise of a redress of grievances was made.

Later on, the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons that 'no promise of protection was made by Her Majesty's Government or by its representative to the leaders of the agitation in Johannesburg',—which, reading between the lines, must have meant that Sir Jacobus de Wet had not been authorized by the High Commissioner to make the promise the Reformers understood him to make.

Woolls-Sampson was not learned in the law. But he had inherited some of the spirit which has made the British nation, and he at once declared that he would rather die than pay the fine. He hoped, and pleaded, that all the prisoners should take up the same attitude. The payment of the fine by the Reformers who refused to go to gaol was almost as great a blow to him as Jameson's inroad. However, he would not give up hope. He had pleaded guilty with the rest of his associates

for the reasons given; but when it came to paying a fine and so concluding the ill-starred revolution he resisted with all the vehemence of his strong nature. Not so, as far as he was concerned, would the matter end. Together with Karri Davies, who stood stoutly by him, he point blank refused to pay and went to prison for fifteen months. Had Paul Kruger but known it, Woolls-Sampson was the most dangerous of the Reformers, for he was fanatical, not open to any compromise, adamant to any suggestion of submission. When, after some months in prison, his mother wrote and begged him to pay the fine and come out of gaol before, in their embarrassment and irritation, his keepers found some means of getting rid of him, he replied that he would be glad if they murdered him, because then certainly England would come in; but he was afraid the Boers were too astute for such a move. This was not rhodomontade; he meant it.

In the old gaol at Pretoria, though a political prisoner and kept apart from the thieves and rogues of the day, his sufferings were enough to have made any man of weaker fibre throw up the sponge and surrender. The extreme heat and cold of Pretoria, the harsh treatment of his gaoler, who, prompted by higher authority, or perhaps by his own vicious hatred, did everything to make the prisoners come to the conclusion that it was better to pay the fine than suffer, and the caged confinement so specially trying to Woolls-Sampson was very hard to bear, but he and Davies stuck it. They walked a given number of miles by calculation every day in the gaol yard to keep fit; they somehow or other contrived to make a hole through and under the gaol

wall by which they might escape if war broke out with England. But not until then would they go. The hope which buoyed them up was that their imprisonment might work to the discomfiture of the Transvaal Government, and might serve to keep alive the flame of resentment at the way the Uitlanders were treated. He wanted if he could to force the hand of England.

Then commenced a position almost unique in history. After he had lingered in prison for nearly a year the Transvaal Government began to find that public opinion, even among Boers like Hans Botha, was growing strongly in favour of a release. Paul Kruger found himself very much in the position of the Home Secretary during the hunger-strike of the suffragettes just before the Great War. He was being defied and was determined not to submit authority to the imputation of having given way in the struggle; on the other hand he was more and more becoming the target of sharp arrows of criticism from many quarters abroad and at home. What Woolls-Sampson had counted on was taking place, even to the alarm of some of the friends of the Transvaal Government at the Cape, where feeling began to exacerbate over the prisoners' continued incarceration under conditions so infernal. The prisoners on their side would accept no olive branch and would not escape.

Here, then, was a Gilbertian deadlock. Who was going to give way? Certainly not Woolls-Sampson. On the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, as an act of clemency, he and Davies were liberated. Thus Woolls-Sampson had added gaol to his other adventures; and be it remembered, for it is a weighty consideration, that

this was before going to gaol for one's opinions had become fashionable. As soon as he had shaken the prison dust from off his feet he made his way down to his own folk at Cape Town, full of doubt about the future, otherwise in good spirits. Here he spent most of his time quietly with his mother, making up in affectionate attendance upon her for the years in which he had misunderstood and undervalued her. So belated a reconciliation of apparently irreconcilable temperaments is very rare but it is all the more precious when it does come.

Events, however, did not stand still for him. The moving finger wrote, while he enjoyed his freedom in the haunts of his youth. Paul Kruger was busy. Men have to bear not only with the outcome of their own individuality, but with that of others. Sir Theophilus Shepstone, by his impetuous *coup d'état*, had brought to life again in bad season the ancient ill-feeling of the Dutch against the English. Prior to 1880, the two races had settled down in amity and mutual respect to the business of the country. Ever since they had been at loggerheads. The retrocession after Amajuba had restored good feeling to a large extent in the Transvaal, but in the Free State and the Cape the victories of the veld-Boer over the trained soldiers of Britain had awakened with feelings of national pride the nationalism of the Dutch, and eventuated in the formation of the Bond, whose originators preached the doctrine of freedom from the English. The flocking of the Uitlanders to the Transvaal added a new cause for uneasiness in the placated Republic. The diggers, however, had come in search of gold and of fortunes as their one

business and were not in the least covetous of the Transvaal or its Government. All they wanted was decent treatment and an administration so much at least in sympathy with them as not to place too many unnecessary stumbling-blocks in their way. This they did not get. The cry for the franchise was directly due to their grievances; the Reform Movement was the result of Paul Kruger's character, stubborn and unyielding; his fear of the newcomers, and his dislike of their outlook, manners and irreligion.

Events were already slowly but surely shaping themselves towards some grand climax when Doctor Jameson appeared upon the veld. Of all the men who may claim the invidious notoriety of having endangered the whole future of South Africa and of having fanned racialism up to blazing point he, by his impetuous Raid into the Transvaal, stands supreme. Had he succeeded, there is nothing that succeeds like success. But, could he have succeeded? Could he possibly have succeeded? Never! Not for one instant. Therefore, it is by his ineptitude that he chiefly stands condemned. From the moment of the Raid the Dutch, almost without exception, throughout the whole of South Africa, jumped to the erroneous conclusion that Great Britain meant to obtain possession of the Transvaal by hook or by crook. What Britisher, then, can decently throw stones at Oom Paul for secretly preparing an immense armament or for choosing his best moment and not waiting for his enemy's? So soon as he thought he was strong enough to overwhelm the British he delivered the Boers' Ultimatum, followed by an invasion of the Cape and Natal. Thus was Woolls-Sampson's last great adventure pre-

pared for him, only a tiny little bit by himself, mainly by fate and the characters of men. Sitting at his ease at the Cape he had kept his eye on the Transvaal and had read unerringly the way things were going. Some months before the war broke out he rose up and took action in his characteristic way. He set about raising the Imperial Light Horse. His first step was to approach the General Commanding at the Cape, who, very rightly, some think—others who, though they liked Sir William,¹ will always still think very much otherwise—refused, point blank, to sanction the proceeding. 'England is not preparing for war', was the exact answer he gave, 'even if the Transvaal is preparing'. This is surely the after-me-the-deluge style of outlook we expect from hand-to-mouth politicians—hardly from soldiers! The remark would have been more pardonable from a politician in safe England than from a responsible British soldier at the Cape, because in those days the United Kingdom was always mobilized against invasion by her incomparable fleet. But if the commandos were to come down from the north the Cape Colony would hardly find itself in the position of security of England. There was nothing to stop the commandos, only an imaginary line on the map, unless some anti-commandos were got ready in time to encounter them. One good word, and one only, can be said for Sir William Butler's pacifist attitude, and according to their personal code of ethics each man and woman must judge whether it outweighs his military inaction: his order to Woolls-Sampson furnishes the English of to-day with a good answer to Colonel Reitz's statement in his book, *Commando*, that he had 'no doubt that

¹ Sir William Butler.

the British Government had made up its mind to force the issue and was the chief culprit'. By the time those three interesting but rather intricate characters, Joe Chamberlain, Frederick Milner and Paul Kruger, have been thoroughly examined under the historical microscope each student will form his own opinion. But our opinion is that if Paul Kruger had stuck to his correspondence with Chamberlain there would have been no war, for the simple reason that Chamberlain was not supreme, and that England under Lord Salisbury would never have declared war on the Republic, the internal government of a country being no just cause for the armed interference of any other Power and he being essentially not a war man. To us this argument is unanswerable. For that very reason Bismarck somewhat unjustly described Lord Salisbury as a lath painted to look like steel. Compared with Chamberlain, Milner, Kruger, or our friend Woolls-Sampson, he was a lath right enough; but we must bear in mind that a lath is, in its own resilient way, also a fairly tough article; and, to show how the lath may prove just as tenacious in getting there as the steel, I will tell a story which I have not been able to tell until now—a generation after the event.

My Christmas in the year 1902 was spent very happily at Gopsall, where a large party had been collected by a hostess who was indeed a hostess. Amongst her guests was de Soveral, Portuguese Ambassador, commonly known as the Blue Monkey, bosom friend to the newly crowned King Edward, and justly a power in the land. For not only were his lighter sayings and sallies brilliant and illuminating but his considered opinions came from a fifty-men-in-the-street-power engine. Nor must I forget

the Blue Hungarian Band usually conducted through a few wild after-dinner whirls by the late Henry Vane Tempest, who crowned a delightful but too brief an existence by endowing Mr. Winston Churchill with that substratum of solid cash so priceless to potential Prime Ministers. To read of a Blue Hungarian Band being at the beck and call of a Capitalist will sadden Mr. Maxton, also Miss Lee, but to me the very thought of it puts the whole of this page into red letters.

One specially sublime night after dinner—very much so—whilst a great lady was twirling on her toes like a dancing Dervish to the fantastic baton strokes of Lord Henry, the Blue Monkey poured into my attentive ear the following believe-it-or-not tale. The moment the peace of Vereeniging was signed he went to see Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in order to secure certain assurances which could not be definitely made good until then. After he had said his say, Mr. Chamberlain replied, 'It's all very well laying stress now on our ancient alliance and the centuries of good will on both sides which lie between us, but why did you not remember this when you might, by acceding to our appeal, have shortened the war by a year at the very least?' Now de Soveral had long since secretly arranged between his own Government and Lord Salisbury that, in case of desperate need, Delagoa Bay and the line to Koomati Poort should be made available for our troops. The call was never made. But in one instant it flashed through his astute brain that Chamberlain had never been told lest he should forthwith create such an occasion of desperate need. An ordinary diplomatist would have let this formidable cat spring right out of

the bag on to the Colonial Office floor. He did nothing of the sort. Pretending to be rather abashed, but expressing a hope that still his small suggestions might be found acceptable, he wriggled his way out of the room and thence straight to the Foreign Office, within which watertight compartment he duly received what was his due.

To return to the war-guilt question and to the comandos of Colonel Reitz, it is only fair to show that the gallant author of that gallant book, although we both think him mistaken, does do his best to be fair. For, after the remark already quoted, wherein he charges the British Government with being the chief culprit, he adds with honourable candour, 'but the Transvaalers were also spoiling for a fight; and from what I saw in Pretoria during the few weeks that preceded the ultimatum I feel sure that the Boers would in any case have insisted on a rupture.' This is quite true, and if it is true, they must not now shirk their share—and a big share it was—of responsibility for the war. Woolls-Sampson was much disgusted with what he called with complete truth 'the perpetual neglect of Englishmen in authority to prepare for an eventuality staring them full in the face'. He was, however, not to be put off his own project. One more case of the private Englishman helping the Empire in the face of the opposition of its Government! So he proceeded to Natal, and there found more encouragement. He foresaw that Natal, in case of war, must find itself in a most dangerous, nay critical, position and so he determined to locate the enrolment of the Light Horse in that Colony.

He commenced communicating, largely in person,

with the kind of men, mostly his friends, whom he wanted for officers and troopers—young South Africans who could ride and shoot; and he gleefully put into the secret purchase of horses much of the money he had saved from the Treasury of Paul Kruger. Maritzburg was to be the rallying point if war broke out. Woolls-Sampson's private mobilization arrangements were very different in their thoroughness from the playing at soldiers indulged in by the Johannesburg crowd before the Raid. Everything was pre-arranged, down to the uniforms. When war did come the Imperial Light Horse sprang into being in good time to be present at the first battle but one on the Natal side (less a squadron under Captain Gilfillan sent to Estcourt which was quite undefended).

As was quickly recognized by the Great German General Staff, Elandsplaagte stands out by its technique, by its precise and symmetrical form, a head and shoulder above the welter of scraps, scoops, regrettable incidents which slowly, slowly—very slowly—during the next two and a half years, were to besprinkle a vast sub-continent with blood. There was something wrong with the technique of the South African War, just as there was to be something even more damnably wrong with the attrition technique of the Great War—(greatest in size, smallest in directing intelligence of any series of military operations since the siege of Troy). Not one of these resounding 'victories' or 'captures' or 'reliefs' of towns in South Africa had any more swift or direct bearing upon the making of peace than Festubert or Loos, or even these more ghastly butcheries of the Somme or Passchendaele. The one lot were dominated

by 'Stop-loss' orders—the other lot were dominated by 'Kill Germans' orders; i.e. 'Kill British'. In neither case were any of these battles dominated by the idea of victory. At the most there lay at the bottom of the plans a hope, a faint hope, that by attrition—in the one case of supplies, territory and towns, in the other of human lives—the far-off end might be brought a shade nearer. To advance from one line of kopjes to another line of kopjes (both strategically valueless); to lose only a very few men or else lose your command; that was the South African idea in a nutshell: so the attack was never pressed and the enemy was always dislodged by wide turning movements with arcs of anything from five to fifteen miles from the position being attacked. As the flanking movement slowly developed the enemy would quietly withdraw and so, at length, this perfectly valueless piece of high veld or bush veld was occupied. Home went a cable. 'Great victory!' cried the newsboys. I still have a poster in my possession issued by a paper long since defunct, *The Echo*. In huge block letters it announces, 'Ian Hamilton captures Heilbron', as it might be the Constable Charles de Bourbon captures Rome. In truth, however, nothing particular took place. A few spluttering shots between advanced guard and rear guard; a white flag; a Landrost in a tall hat who gave me a big key on a plate; afterwards a large cup of coffee. Both were thrown away on the first convenient opportunity. Johannesburg and Pretoria much the same: not a shot was fired at Johannesburg after the attack of the Gordons at Doornkop. Of set purpose the enemy were given time to get clear. At Pretoria, had it been rushed, there would have been heavy fighting and

perhaps something decisive would have ensued but, as usual, by the peremptory order of Sir Herbert Kitchener, I was forced to halt and recall de Lisle's Mounted Infantry as they were in the very act of pouncing upon the enemy's capital at the gallop. Some of them even got in, but they were so few that they had to lie low as the Boers cleared out of the town. Now, I am well aware that Sir Fred Roberts had a very genuine fear of the effect upon troops of storming a city; for the first, and never by me forgotten, example of it was when, after Charasia, he forbade 'Redan' Massy (whose A.D.C. I was) to follow on the heels of the flying Afghans into Kabul City with the Cavalry Brigade. The great little man had never forgotten the horrors and dangers of the storming of Delhi. Therefore, in the cases of Johannesburg, and Pretoria also, the idea of letting the enemy get away quietly was at least founded on the personal experience and conviction of a famous soldier. In practice, however, some of us always thought that we ought to have risked all that, the real 'all that' being fear of the outcry by people, press and politicians at home if there was any heavy loss of life. So brother Boer was enabled to save his kit, and what was far more important, to save his face, keep his pecker up and keep the war going.

But at Elandslaagte the war was still young. Woolls-Sampson was not the only thruster in the field and the bloodless capture of a kopje was not in the least the sort of victory we were out for. Our intense and savage hope was to pin the Boers down to their ground, to storm their position with the bayonet, and to finish up the business with sabre and lance, pursuing just as far as our horses would carry us. Where would they have

carried us? Over the Biggarsberg Pass, left open after our victory without a Boer to defend it; next to the blowing up of the Ingagene Bridge and the cutting of all communication between Boer G.H.Q. and Pretoria. Had this happened, call Woolls-Sampson a Dutchman if it would not have been too much for the nerves of Joubert and Oom Paul. Up to Elandslaagte the Boers, with Majuba in their minds, had been supremely confident that they would easily round up and overthrow the heavy-armed, slow-moving British infantry under Buller every time they met them. They felt as those mounted archers the Parthians must have felt when they heard old Croesus was about to come crawling out after them into the desert with the heavy-armed legionaries of Rome. The basis of all their calculations (as of the Parthians) was that they would be able to take just as much or just as little of the battle as they liked and would always be able to disengage and get away. Therefore, the complete upset to the foundations of their beliefs, which seemed to have been supplied by the repulse of Talana and the disaster of Elandslaagte, might well have given them pause even at the eleventh hour. The burning of Moscow did not cow the Russians in 1812 any more than the burning of farms was to cow the Boers in 1901, but a complete wipe out of their army at Borodino would, from all we know about it now, have caused the Czar to climb down; so too a quite complete wipe out of Koch's commando at Elandslaagte, together with the appearance of our horsemen on the communications between his main army and Pretoria, would surely have opened the eyes of Oom Paul. These things, it may be said, do not happen in modern wars. But they might

quite well have happened at Elandslaagte had the battle begun two hours earlier, the infantry being on the ground by then and imploring French to let them advance to the attack. Also, had the victory been reasonably exploited—'reasonably', we need not ask for more.

In reading the Official History of the war no one can gather that any opportunity had been missed; still less that a precipitate withdrawal took place at dawn the morning after this completest of victories—a withdrawal in a strange sort of panic when most of the prisoners were allowed to escape, rifles and ammunition left strewing the battlefield (except the rifle of Koch, the mortally wounded enemy commander, which is still in my possession): even the two captured enemy guns round which so many had died were saved only by the skin of the teeth of a very gallant aide-de-camp and a very reluctant fatigue party he compelled to clamber out of the closely packed cattle-trucks of the just-on-the-point-of-starting train and volunteer. All this when we should have been pushing up northwards hell-for-leather, to show ourselves as the triumphant victors, were it only with a white flag of truce flying at the head of a bloody lance to arrange for an armistice to bury the dead.

Woolls-Sampson had been in some pretty tight corners already. Nature herself had endeavoured to try and obliterate him, and assegais, bullets, and the horns or teeth of wild animals, had given him many a close shave. But never before and never afterwards in any of his adventures, including Cypherfontein and Benson's last fight at Bakenlaagte—never, so he told me long afterwards—did he play touch-and-go with the Grisly King so many times as in the three or four minutes

before he was actually laid out on the slopes of Elands-laagte.

Indeed, it was a most desperate and bitter little battle. On the Boer side were the Zarps, or Johannesburg Police, on the other the Johannesburg Uitlanders in the I.L.H. On the Boer side, too, were the Hollander and German contingents, eager to prove in this their first encounter that they were as brave as any Afrikander on the ground; and facing them, though they did not yet know it, were the Gordon Highlanders, who never forget, and advanced to the assault with the pipes playing the Cock o' the North and the men shouting out, 'Amajuba! Remember Majuba!!' Brave Germans and Hollanders, you certainly died game. And I don't suppose you even understood this strange word 'Amajuba', which a lot of young lads in petticoats were shouting out as they came rushing on with levelled bayonets; but the Boers knew well enough!

There is a lot to be said about that deadly encounter in the fading twilight—all that need be said here are the few words necessary to make clear the action of the Imperial Light Horse, Woolls-Sampson's lambs as they might be called, had they not been as fierce on that day as a wolf pack.

Elands-laagte, though on so minute a scale, conformed perfectly to the sealed pattern battle of movement, the only break away from the Aldershot type being the enormously wide extensions of the frontal holding attack by the Devons, an idea brought home by me from the Tirah Campaign in Afridiland of 1896-97, and transplanted to Salisbury Plain in 1898, when I was sent down there to train a Militia Brigade. Afterwards this

wide extension became known to the military world of the continent as *Büren Taktik* or *Tactique des Boers*, and was regarded by all of them, especially perhaps the Russians, with ineffable contempt *until after the advance from the Marne to the Aisne*, when we get a perfect and highly appreciative account of it in several German war books, notably in *The Advance from Mons*, by Walter Bloem. The far-flung outflanking attack of the Gordons and Manchesters, on the left flank of the enemy, beyond the outer rim of which rode the I.L.H., had to hit it off exactly with the final assault by the frontal attack, who for their part were not to close in nearer than 800 yards until they could gauge the progress of the flanking attack and make fairly sure that the attention of the defenders was distracted from them to the onrushing flank attack. Once the position was carried, our cavalry, under orders issued by General French, were to pursue round the far, or right, flank of the Boers. When Colonel Scott-Chisholme and the I.L.H. had got well round the flank they rode straight in on the right of the infantry as if they were going to gallop at the left centre of the rear of the Boer position. But soon the rise of the hill became too steep and the enemy fire too hot, so they there and then dismounted and began to climb on foot, Scott-Chisholme leading with a red silk handkerchief tied to a stick. To see that little red rag going on and on and on without a falter was the very bravest sight I have ever seen in my life. Marvellous to relate, he carried on untouched until the very last stage of the assault—the Boer counter-attack when, for a moment, they retook the guns. He fell then, hit by three bullets through the legs, lungs and head. He had lived his short life and

died his swift death like a hero. One moment leading—five magnificent squadrons every eye on him: the next he falls, all is over, he feels it; dying he sees it in the hurried side glance of those who press onwards following already a new leader—and that new leader should have been our friend Aubrey—Major Woolls-Sampson, second in command of the I.L.H.—now 'in command'.

Well, so far as I can find out, Aubrey had been practically *hors de combat* for about ten minutes when his first great chance came to him. A common or garden British Major used in my own youth to be able to say some strange and blood-curdling oaths. General Tucker still survives amongst us as a specimen of that school of conversation whose words are punctuated by a series of electrical shocks. But, during those precious minutes, whilst he raced with Scott-Chisholme up the steepening hillside, whilst the bullets fired at close range struck the stones all round him with a series of deafening cracks as of pistol shots in his ears, whilst every second death jogged his elbow as he heard a comrade give that peculiar characteristic groan—rather an exclamation of intense surprise than of agony—as the fatal message hits him full in the body; whilst all these furies were raging in the air he walked straight on, berserker fashion, in the open, twirling his little stick not as has been said, 'as cool as on parade', but pouring out a torrent of curses to his men for not dodging bullets by darting from rock to rock whilst he himself, as one invulnerable, strode on defying his fate. His thoughts I think I can imagine. All eyes were on him. The moment of his life had come. He bore a charmed life; God could not find the heart to let him fall. So intense a passion and fury of energy filled

his veins that it seemed to him as if nothing on earth could stop him. But a bullet cares nothing for the impressions of a second in command: it flies till it finds its billet. One of those bullets, said to have been explosive, found that billet in Aubrey Woolls-Sampson's thigh; he fell, his bone split in three directions. Woolls-Sampson was recommended for the V.C. that day. I suppose I must have recommended him to French, as he was on foot and working with my infantry, but I do not clearly remember.¹ Two V.C.'s were, however, ultimately granted to the Imperial Light Horse. They were awarded to Captain C. Mullins and to R. Johnstone, and were won during that most tense moment when the Boers, with an enthusiasm of fury and utter contempt of death which I never saw them equal again during the campaign, counter-attacked in the most desperate manner, recovering for a moment their guns—a moment during which anything on earth might have happened and very nearly did happen.

The result of the battle was 263 British casualties—225 Boer casualties plus 200 Boer prisoners; also two guns taken, and a complete laager with wagons, Cape carts and rifles, and ammunition boxes galore. To the generation who fought in the Great War these figures will appear much too slight to carry the load of words which has been built upon them. All told the Boers were not much over a thousand; and as for the British who had to attack, it must be borne in mind that the regular cavalry and artillery suffered no loss, the whole of that falling on about 950 infantry and the I.L.H. Koch, the

¹A copy of the War Office letter refusing this V.C. is given in Appendix I.

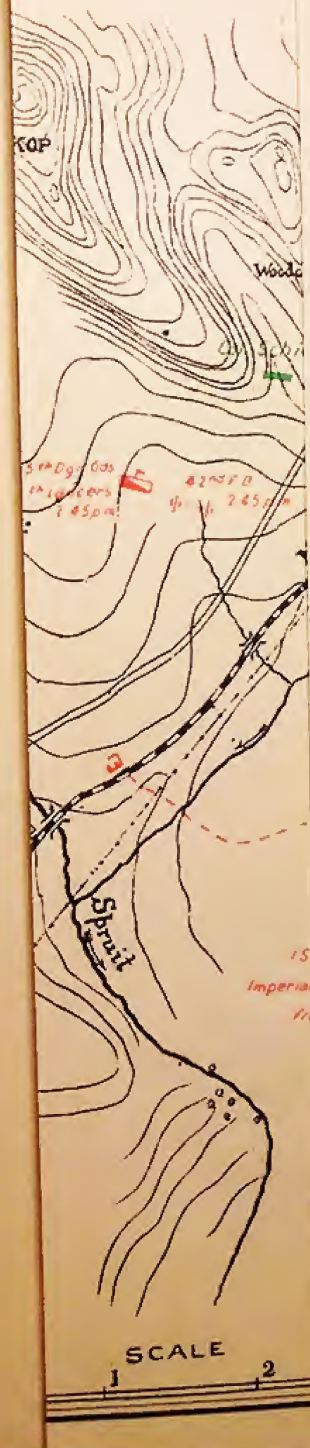
Boer General, was mortally wounded. He was a man of gravity and distinction, dressed in a black frock-coat and tall hat, bearing himself during the ordeal of that dreadful night with complete self-command. No ancient Roman could have shown greater dignity and calm in the way he took the loss of his own life as well as of the battle. And let me say this: a Commander who leaves to posterity a fine example of conduct, leaves to his own folk something better than the perishable trophy of a captured standard or cannon of bronze. Everything was done for him on a battlefield whereon darkness and cold rain had descended and where men were still out picking up the wounded, whose piteous cries could be heard growing fainter and more faint as the night of victory wore on. We got a shelter rigged up for him, a tarpaulin being used to form a tent, and he lay on a mattress someone had found (I cannot say where, perhaps in one of the houses at the station), whilst the rest of us slept anywhere; I myself, for instance, on the stones under a wagon. I saw him once more before he died in Ladysmith, being tended exactly in every way as if he had been one of our own Generals. The reason I thus particularize regarding the last days of the brave old General is that afterwards, on this very subject, deadly poison was injected by the black mamba snake called Propaganda into the body politic of South Africa.

The natural tendency of Boer farmers and British soldiers is to become the best of friends. The British soldiers of the regular army liked the Boers, so let us be fair and honest about it now at last, and acknowledge God had meant the Boer and Briton to be brothers; not brothers like Cain and Abel; not artificial Foreign-Office-made brothers,

like the Allies during the Great War, but good brothers. The battle of Elandslaagte itself furnished proofs as clear of this natural tendency as anyone would wish to see. After the desperate Boer counter-attack, when we had rallied and were countering the counter-attack for the last time, some of the Boers, about a dozen of them, who had worked themselves up into the 'determined to die' mood, stuck to their rocks and continued to shoot until we were right upon the top of them. Quite certainly each of these men had killed, or at least knocked out, two or three of our lads after (it must have become plain to them) the battle was utterly and hopelessly lost. By all the customs of war they had absolutely forfeited their own lives. When the Gordons were on the point of stepping on to them they jumped up and raised their hands over their heads. Several of the Highlanders, being new to the bloody game, drew back their rifles for the lunge but could not drive the bayonet home. I have a perfect picture still in the eye of memory which shows me a fair-haired young Boer with the down on his cheek, wearing a grey felt hat from which dangled a bunch of coloured ribands. Two Gordons could not, between them, find the heart to kill him. So he was led off, and no doubt they gave him cigarettes and coffee. Quite likely, too, he walked away next morning with most of the other prisoners. But that sort of way of behaviour is regarded with the utmost contempt and displeasure by those gallant propagandists who for the most part avoid the front of fire as the devil steers clear of a font of holy water. In 1899 their treachery against humanity as well as heaven was not carried to the lengths, or rather depths, it was afterwards to sink to during the

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Great War; even so, it was quite bad enough to merit ten million years of hell fire. About the first move they made during the South African War was the circulating of a story that General Koch, whilst mortally wounded, had been badly treated by the British. Compared to what the English and German 'lie factories' were to achieve during the Great War this was, of course, rather a feeble effort. The Boers did not suggest that we had cut off Koch's hands or boiled him down for fat. And it was not the Boers who later on published cartoons of British regiments marching along with Boer babies impaled upon their bayonets or advancing to the assault holding Boer women before them as their shields. 'Badly treated' is a more vague aspersion. Still, as a beginning it was not so bad. My feelings on this subject are I fear rather violent. All this peace and disarmament talk, all the chatter about suppressing armament firms, is the merest piffle if we permit, and indeed encourage, 'propaganda'. Only under the cloak of war can these devilish libellers assume the mask of patriotism and get away safely with their libels. Let Geneva now insist that whenever a peace is made it must include a proviso between the high contracting parties to the effect that any person falsely and slanderously accused of cutting off children's hands, boiling down the bodies of dead comrades to extract from them grease, ill-treating the wounded, maltreating prisoners, should have his remedy in the ordinary civil court of law, and that, in this respect, no distinction should be drawn between victors and vanquished: for what has victory or defeat to do with the question of truth or falsehood? Were this idea to meet with international acceptance it would be



found that wars would only last half as long; would be waged, whilst they lasted, with only one half of the venom; and would not leave behind them one half the rancour.

So now Woolls-Sampson with his military career cut short for ever (it seemed to most of us)—for a very long time (it must have appeared even to himself)—was brought into Ladysmith hospital in exceedingly doleful condition. The swift march to the battlefield, the rush and intoxication of galloping horses and the joy of combat were succeeded by a dead march of agony. At Elandslaagte he was carried by soldiers stumbling in the dark over the rugged ground. He has described to me the darting, burning pain at the jolts; the feeling of having his leg torn off with each stumble of his comrades; once the men fell and he, Woolls-Sampson, could hardly prevent himself from screaming. Next day it was found that his leg had been roughly spliced on the field to a rifle as a splint and that this rifle was still loaded, the muzzle pointing to his armpit.

Skipping with relief over the opportunity missed by the Ladysmith garrison on the 27th October when, at the last moment, we funked an attack upon a body of some five thousand Boers who had dossed down for the night with ten guns in a most vulnerable laager; skipping over with even more relief the Battle of Mournful Monday, it will be enough to say that Ladysmith was soon after invested by the Boers, as Pretoria had been in 1881, and that again no news came through as to Woolls-Sampson's condition to his friends and relatives outside the Boer lines. Most people probably gave him up for dead. Actually, he was alive but was suffering intense pain from his leg, which he resolutely refused to

have amputated. He told the persistent doctors that he would rather die than have it taken off. The doctors told him and everyone else he jolly well would die if he didn't. But he had, as he knew, saved his arm from the surgeon's knife in 1881 by a like refusal. With indomitable determination he had refused to die and had kicked Science out of the window; now he was to preserve his leg by the same unshakeable resolve. Once more his splendid constitution was to prevent any complications arising from the wound, though the pain from the sciatic nerve turned his hair grey; and it was long before he could do more than limp with a stick. Not *the* stick which had, he thought at first, been lost at Elandslaagte. He had asked for it on entering Ladysmith; he even got men to go back to the battlefield to look for it. And then, just when hope was leaving him—for I believe he would have died had he lost it—the stick was found in the left leg of his breeches where he had placed it at once on falling, and before he became unconscious.

Between the date of the Battle of Elandslaagte and the investment of Ladysmith by the Boers, there was time and to spare for the wounded to be sent out of the town before it was finally invested, but Woolls-Sampson characteristically declined to quit and preferred to be present if a siege took place, firmly believing that the Boers would be routed in the long run. Here is a picture of what he elected to share, from a graphic and quite accurate account of Ladysmith as it was at the time, given by Ian Colvin in his *Life of Jameson*. Although I know the place much more intimately than that skilled writer can possibly know it, yet for that very reason I could not describe it so well.

'It was a little town of brick and corrugated iron, built on an alluvial flat, almost upon the level of the Klip River, and surrounded by steep, rocky hills. It was normally hot, and the siege took place in the hottest months of the year, with temperatures running up to 104° in the shade. This little town had become a centre of refuge for Northern Natal, as well as a military depot. The garrison alone numbered over 13,000 men, and there were besides 2000 Europeans and about 6000 Kaffirs, Cape boys and Indians. And as General White allowed his cavalry and field artillery to be locked up with the infantry, we must add thousands of horses and mules, as well as the flocks and herds of the colonists. The place became pestiferous. Enteric and dysentery were epidemic, people died like flies. When things were at their worst, there were 1900 patients in hospitals intended for 300, and at one time or another half the inhabitants passed through the hands of the doctors. As food ran short the people were fed largely upon horse-flesh, skilfully disguised. To complete the happy picture, we must imagine a liberal peppering of shells from the two "Long Tom" siege guns and the four Krupp howitzers, which the Boers, with unaccustomed energy, brought into position around the town.'

The whole of that is excellent, excepting only the adverb 'skilfully' as applied to the disguised horse-flesh. The only attempt made to disguise the sickly-sweet, nauseating taste of horse or mule slaughtered just as it was on the verge of dying from starvation, was to call it *chevreuil* (French for roe venison). But Thomas A—— is not so easily to be humbugged, not when eating is in question.

The shelling, though on paper quite negligible when compared to the shelling of the trenches during the Great War or during the siege of Port Arthur, was really not at all negligible. After all, three of the guns were 6-inchers and you never knew when it might move the Boer gunners to pop them off. Several of the highly placed ones gradually sank into the earth, not as corpses but as anti-corpses, or folk who were out for safety first. When Woolls-Sampson heard the opening whizz boom-bang-crack of a bombardment he used to take his chair out of the dug-out and proceeded to enjoy the fun. There were four of those who had been concerned in the Raid amongst the Ladysmith garrison, and they all took it differently. Woolls-Sampson was like Ajax defying the lightning. Whenever I looked in on him there were sure to be two or three others there usually belonging to the I.L.H. Always Woolls-Sampson was holding forth on the necessity for more vigour in the defence; for constant counter-attacks—for more spirit, devil and go; if only his leg had mended we would have heard of him again and again during the siege. I can see him sitting there now. A splendid figure of a man. His features refined by suffering looked like some of the finest Greek sculptures of the warriors of old. His every gesture implied the man of action—the leader—and, in some sense, he did lead even from that dug-out on the bank of the Klip River. Karri Davies was another of the same sort. He fought right through with the I.L.H. and nothing could have been finer. As to Willoughby and Doctor Jameson they were singular in their self-effacement. They were very rarely seen: they did not take a hand in the fighting: not until many years after-

wards did I hear that Doctor Jim had been doing some doctoring, but it cannot have been very much, or surely I should have met him sometimes at the hospital, whereas the only time I ever did see him during the whole siege was at Ava's funeral. There is no suggestion here that these Raiders ought to have played a more active part in the life of the besieged garrison. I only make the remark because their complete subsidence contrasted curiously with the energy Woolls-Sampson managed to deploy although he was tied by the leg to his chair. Also because, as a matter of fact, we were all of us a good deal intrigued at the time by their passivity, which did not seem to fit in with their past. Hence, perhaps, arose the legend that they felt if they took any active part in the defence it must be with ropes round their necks. Frankie Rhodes, though not a Raider, belonged very much to that lot: a delightful creature, reminiscent to me always of the Gay Lord Quex, he played an inimitable *rôle*. Instead of being intense and serious like Woolls-Sampson, or apparently indifferent like Doctor Jim, he took the whole siege as a huge joke and was as useful as anyone in Ladysmith as an encouraging factor for the garrison. He was everywhere. Miles and miles he would walk in all weathers, including unhealthy Bulwana or shell-weather, to carry some cheering bit of gossip from one section of the defence to the other, or to share out a parcel of cigarettes which had come through to him in some semi-miraculous manner. As to the rope round his neck, no vision of that seemed ever to stop him from taking up a rifle and having a crack if ever such a chance came along.

Meanwhile, Woolls-Sampson sat by the dirty little

Klip river waiting for the day on which he firmly believed Ladysmith would be relieved, and drinking, in defiance of all the medicos, copious draughts of tainted water, stiff with typhoid germs of a malignant enough type to have ulcerated the inside of an ostrich.

CHAPTER III

BLOOD WILL TELL

THE letter from General Lord Rawlinson, the latter part of which has already been quoted at the beginning of Chapter II., began thus:

'I was overjoyed to hear from Walter Bagot that you were still going strong, and I write this letter of greeting and good cheer to let you know that my memory of your great self in the trying times of Ladysmith, before, during, and after the siege, is as fresh as ever.

'Much water has flowed under the bridge since those days, and I have seen something of the wars of nations, and the battles of giants. I look back on them as having taught me that the one thing of all others, that makes victory certain in the end, is that great determination and faith of which you were so marked an exponent in Ladysmith.

'You may not have known it, but as a young Staff Officer in those days I have treasured ever since the picture of you lying wounded in a dug-out by the Klip river, swearing that you would ride into Pretoria at the head of your regiment. And you did it!

This blessed dug-out lay midway between my bivouac on Caesar's Camp and Sir George White's Head Quarters, where I had to go several times a week to report. Almost always I found time to look in upon

Woolls-Sampson. Usually there were two or three others present, and if, as was sometimes the case, they had come there with the idea of heartening and cheering Woolls-Sampson they found themselves walking away with the boot on the other foot: they, not he, were going to get the pick-me-up; the hale and hearty were to drink freely from the wounded hero's inexhaustible cellar of that wine of victory, 'The Will to Win'. The scene was reminiscent of those ancient days in pre-historical Scotland when Christianity first appeared and converts from the neighbouring glens were drawn together to the 'kill' or 'cell' of some hermit to refresh their weary souls at these little wells of faith and gain fresh courage for their encounters with the heathen who encompassed them about and held the crests of the mountains. On these occasions I never knew him fail to be steadfast and confident, though, in my war experiences dating from Afghanistan 1878-79 onwards, I had noticed that the bravest men, men of this very V.C. type, were much more apt than others to give way entirely to their nerves when they found themselves lying helpless from wounds in hospital or ambulance and in that state heard the rattle of musketry drawing closer. Gradually, although (or perhaps because) we were very unlike one another, Woolls-Sampson and I became friends, and so continued—fast friends—until after the peace of Vereeniging; when, before a man could as much as say 'Jack Robinson', that friendship was wiped off the slate until it is to be seen here trying to peep out again shyly into print twenty-nine years afterwards. As it happens the story of this quarrel about nothing can be told quite simply and without casting any reflection on anyone;

I *will* tell it, therefore, as it should enable the reader to grasp an aspect of Woolls-Sampson's character without any beating about the bush.

After peace was signed I was directed, as K.'s Chief of Staff, to issue an order that all loot captured from enemies should be at once handed over to Head Quarters: the valuables, whatever they might be, were then to be auctioned and, if I remember aright, the proceeds were to go to swell the Field Force Canteen surplus. Lord K. was ultra-keen about this order. Like Sir Donald Stewart, Lord Roberts' predecessor as Commander-in-Chief in India, he had a good habit, pushed sometimes to the verge of mania, of saving or making a pile of money for the State. Where even Mr. Snowden might hesitate he would jump in with an order. Actually, this order was, as not a few of his orders were, against human nature. My own belief is that most men just quietly stuck to the little trophies which to them were real treasures, although in a South African auction, these perquisites would have brought in most probably only a few pence. In my house to-day is not only the little sporting Mauser of Koch's already referred to, but the rifle surrendered by General Marthius at Verliesfontein, and my own field-glasses, taken from me as I lay wounded at Majuba in 1881. There, the field-glasses lie, as I write, battered out of shape and quite worthless at an auction but worth a mint of money to me; because, battered as they are, they still bear my name engraved as clearly as ever upon them—'Lieut. Ian Hamilton, 92nd Highlanders.' In 1902 they were retaken from the body of a Boer who fell in single combat with an 18th Hussar. They were sent up to me at Pretoria by

Percy Marling, then on the high veld near Standerton, commanding the regiment. Marling is still happily living as Sir Percy Marling, V.C., in great honour and glory, and long may he continue to do so. Now, what I'd like to know is this—whose were those field-glasses? I defy Solomon in the fullest vigour of his intellect to decide, for I handsomely rewarded the N.-C.O. who actually brought them back to me. Anyway, there they are in proof positive that I myself, Chief of Staff and signator of the order, DID NOT PUT THEM UP FOR SALE at K.'s grand auction and that I will continue to stick to them until death or a fire or a cat burglar do come along to part us.

Woolls-Sampson, however, was not built on those light and airy lines. Directly the order came out he wrote me: 'I have a pony which is the apple of my eye.' He went on to suggest that if he had been of any small service to the Empire he might be given formal permission by me as Chief of the Staff to keep it. At once I scented trouble. I knew quite well the uncompromising sort of devil Woolls-Sampson was, and I knew K. was equally uncompromising when, as at that moment, he was racing full cry after some 'special idea'—whether it was to trap a score or so of Boers in cages made of millions of miles of barbed wire at a cost of millions of pounds or to make a penny-ha'penny over a deal in my field-glasses did not much matter. So I was really rather worried, for I felt sure Woolls-Sampson would never take a hint and that it must be yea or nay. My pen was actually dipped in the ink to write down the 'Yea': I was big enough to stand the shot, but then luck is luck and K. was K. So, as Fate

willed it, who should come into my office at that very moment but the great K. himself and I was ass enough to ask him. What a mistake! He was in that mood which lay out of reach of the arts of persuasion. 'No!' cried K. 'Tell him to go to the devil, but tell him at the same time he can buy back the pony if he likes.' This he said hoping that thus the price of the pony might be raised a few shillings by the bidding. Such was K. In vain did I protest, 'Woolls-Sampson stands by himself and will form no precedent—he has not drawn a penny of pay for his services and the State owes him more than it can ever repay'. 'No!' repeated K. 'We can't make any exceptions.' This was a positive order which had to be put across. But although softened with regrets and explanations it proved to be the end of everything human or friendly between me and Woolls-Sampson. That he who had lived, worked, bled for the Empire should have his pony taken from him though he had captured it at the risk of his life—that was too much for Woolls-Sampson. I bore all the blame; never thereafter could I quite break through the barrage of politeness which he put up at once against any of my attempts (and I made a good many) to renew the camaraderie of the past. In one sense it had been a long camaraderie although we had never met in the flesh until Elands-laagte. As long ago as 1881 Woolls-Sampson and I had already been engaged together in fighting against the enraged Boers who wanted the Transvaal all to themselves with no ugly red-coats spoiling the look of the veld. I have already told how, when, amidst the shadows that gathered round the foot of Majuba, a shameful peace was signed, far away to the North Woolls-Sampson

took the Union Jack that had waved over Pretoria and buried it at dead of night; whilst, a little later, down South in Natal, the 92nd Gordon Highlanders were also burying an effigy of their historic number to the light of torches and with prayers that it might someday rise again. How little do we realize history in the making of it! We reckon in terms of gaudy Kings and Queens, of sapient Prime Ministers, bestarred Generals and Press Propagandists, whilst some unknown subaltern is catching the imaginations of the ex-service men and all their groups of relatives and sympathizers by burying the rag called a flag! Twenty thousand young Imperials were to die twenty years later because of these funerals and the feelings they symbolized. That a mere handful of veld Boers should have defeated the world-famous British infantry and brought Queen Victoria to her knees was too potent a draught of success for Boer heads to carry; their racial pride was stimulated to a pitch at which it became unendurable to English-speaking Afrikaners who, for their part, had become bitter and touchy in brooding over the thought that their leaders had 'taken a licking' when they had troops enough within cannon shot at least to have driven the Boers back off British territory before they sat down to eat their humble pie. By October 1899 both sides were—as Colonel Reitz says in his *Commando*—'spoiling for a fight'. And so, in the ripeness of time, the cry of 'Majuba! Majuba!! Amajuba!!!' rang out over another battlefield as the Gordons at Elandsplaagte charged home with the bayonet and Woolls-Sampson fell in the forefront of the Imperial Light Horse with his thigh-bone shattered by a bullet.

Therefore I have felt sad at odd and reminiscent moments when I have thought how my friendship for Woolls-Sampson was wrecked in the crash between two wills like those of K. and his best Intelligence Officer—but, at the same time, the incident has never been allowed by me to damp in the smallest degree my admiration for either of the men involved. They both acted according to type, and I should almost have been disappointed if either of them had climbed down.

When after nearly four months' siege, the town was relieved, and Captain Gilfillan, of the Imperial Light Horse and the relieving force, made straight for Woolls-Sampson in the dug-out, he was welcomed, to his surprise, with a bottle of champagne, which the optimist had hidden early in the siege, against the day when he would celebrate the victory. Faith is said to remove mountains, but it does not usually run to stocking champagne and resisting the temptation to drink it during all the privations of a siege.

Colonel Schermbrucker, a veteran of the Crimea, once told me (the Judge) in the Cape House of Assembly, after Colenso, that the Boers could never win the war, because they could not follow up a success. So Kimberley was relieved, and Ladysmith, and Mafeking. The Imperial Light Horse took part in the latter relief, but Woolls-Sampson could not accompany them. His leg healed slowly and painfully; the doctors with one voice cried 'No'. All the same, Woolls-Sampson would not give in. Every day anew he fought his own secret battle against the bacilli of corruption. Every night he focused every energy against the germs which were holding him back. His recovery would be a slap in the face

for science. Well, recover he did—enough for his purpose—and all the doctors were confounded. With high temperature on me (the General) from enteric I was carried down to Durban and put on a ship for Cape Town, raging against the 'damn pursuit' methods of old Buller. Thence, after recovery at Cecil Rhodes' delightful mansion, I was to go and play my part in the big trek up North.

Early in May 1900 the I.L.H., still without Woolls-Sampson, were brought over from Natal and joined Mahon's column for the relief of Mafeking. Although the success of the combined operations which followed gave old Britannia fits, so much so that she promptly gave birth to a new word for hysterics, the fighting was fortunately insignificant. This—I mean the avoidance of loss—was, so I have always heard, largely due to the clever advice of Frankie Rhodes, Karri Davies, and the I.L.H. generally. When, exactly, Woolls-Sampson insulted medical opinion by rejoicing I cannot ascertain. But sure it is that, by the 11th June, whilst Roberts was fighting the battle of Diamond Hill, Woolls-Sampson was entering Potchefstroom. From thence, in September 1900, the regiment, then acting as part of Mahon's brigade under French, was ordered to Pretoria for reorganization, in terms of an arrangement by which twenty per cent. of the Colonial Division could, if they wished, be relieved from further military duty. Woolls-Sampson then rode at the head of his regiment, as he had said he would, into Pretoria, which had been taken during the previous month. The grim satisfaction with which he entered again the scene of his long imprisonment may well be imagined. The Law Courts



BRUCE HAMILTON AND HIS STAFF ON TREK IN 1900



WINSTON CHURCHILL AND THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH AWAITING A REPLY FROM BRUCE HAMILTON [with telescope] TO A MESSAGE FROM IAN HAMILTON. THE BATTLE OF DIAMOND HILL IS IN FULL SWING

BLOOD WILL TELL

and the gaol must have been a specially pleasing sight to Woolls-Sampson, gazing at them as he did with the eye of a conqueror. He says, however, very little of this in his letters; he was rarely in a communicative mood when he himself was the subject—one of the reasons perhaps why he left so little material for his biography.

Writing to his mother in October 1900 from Pretoria he says: 'You will, I daresay, have heard of my presence in this town. It is only of a temporary nature. The regiment has been practically reorganized, and in the course of the next two days I shall again take the field. So far as actual war goes, there is little or no fighting. Our people, I fear, are not dealing in such a summary manner with the detached parties of Boers as the Germans did during the Franco-German war. My leg has not made any decided progress towards final recovery. It is, however, no worse, and my general health is really excellent. It will not be possible for me to return during the continuance of the war. Besides my natural inclination is to keep the field as long as a single Boer remains in arms.'

That is all—from a man who could not have failed to draw a parallel between his leaving Pretoria in 1897 and his re-entry at the head of his regiment in 1900.

When gold-mining started again a number of the Imperial Light Horse had to resume work on the Rand, but the Regiment was soon brought up to strength again.

After this our paths lay far apart for a long period, though, as will be seen, I have been able to follow up Woolls-Sampson's spoor more or less during the interval which was to elapse before we came again into close personal contact. From all I was able to gather at the time, and from threads I had to draw together when

afterwards I became Chief of Staff in South Africa, it seems that as commander of a unit Woolls-Sampson did not find the true medium for self-expression. In many ways he was literally second to none; in others he was second to quite a few. Put in another way—as Colonel of the I.L.H. over a long spell of time Woolls-Sampson had his limitations. His mind was too much inflamed with patriotism and too much concentrated on the one thought of how to get to grips with the enemy to be able to study patiently, so as to grapple with them effectively, all the hundred and one details of clothing, food and comfort which go to keeping a regiment in good fettle over a prolonged period of danger and of strain. Thus it came about that his troopers were very often heard to swear. There is more to it even than that. Your fanatical fighter is apt to forget too much that he has the lives of many others to consider and that it is up to him to look before he leaps. I have come across during my career three or four officers and about as many men (excluding pipers) whose exultation of spirit in battle did seem to render them absolutely and always immune to fear. Once in a way and just upon their day they may inspire the ranks to follow suit. But when the men get to know that this thrusting gallantry is the fixed characteristic of their leader and that they are tied up under his orders for the duration of the war they begin to take alarm. They begin to say to one another: 'We hav'nt a dog's chance. Our Captain is a lunatic' (only they use another expression); 'he does not set a pin's value upon his life, but I value mine', and then, after a time, the too tensely strung bow-string is apt to snap. Opinion is quite fluid upon this weighty matter; one of the

weightiest which can engage the mind of a War Office, although statesmen rarely waste thoughts upon it. They think the question 'philosophical'—in truth it is severely practical. Even a very good regiment finds it exhausting to be commanded for too long at a stretch by one of those heroes with fire in his belly and nerves of iron who spurns not only delights but an ordinary veld dinner of bully and biscuit boiled into that slosh which soldiers, *faute de mieux*, learnt to adore. Yes, your Woolls-Sampsons are capable of spurning hot soup; of saddling up and leaving it there spilled upon the veld for the aasvogels—wasting its fragrance on the desert air. And why? Because a Kaffir has whispered in his ear the word 'Boer' and because he prefers the off-chance of a scrap to the dead certainty of hot soup. At this period a good deal of slackness and irregularity was showing itself in the Western Transvaal, and there is no doubt at all that the impedimenta of some of the columns was increasing to so great an extent as seriously to interfere with their mobility; *i.e.* with their military efficiency. Woolls-Sampson was able himself to subsist on the smell of an oil rag, as the soldiers say, and he expected his men to do ditto. To be shaken up out of sleep when you are very, very tired is exasperating; to be shaken perpetually out of slackness, inertia, and such alleviations to war's trials as may be secured by trekking with double the regulation allowance of kit is irritating. If the Big General does not himself conform, as sometimes he did not, by degrees the men serving under his stricter subordinates get fed up. The show is then ripe for the 'regrettable incident!' But let no one forget, in summing up the qualities of this remarkable Englishman, that he,

in spite of the incident I am about to describe, or rather as a direct result of that incident, was predestined to become, more perhaps than any other single individual, the instrument whereby the war in South Africa was going to be brought to a close.

The situation as it stood at the time Woolls-Sampson, at the head of a live body in the midst of a languidly conducted operation, was thrusting along as fast as human and equine flesh and blood could thrust, is described by one who served under his orders. The writer, I should add, was and is a true and loyal, though not a blind, admirer of the ex-commander of the Imperial Light Horse. 'Though his intense patriotic spirit so uplifted him as to enable him to ignore the severe and ever-present pain in his smashed thigh, his mind bent on the one desire to destroy every Boer in the field, inflamed his natural irritation at the long drawn-out progress of the war. His whole being chafed under this prolonged trial to his strained nerves, so much so that he acquired the habit of ascribing failure in obtaining decisive results to everything appertaining to regular army military methods, including their commissariat arrangements. Had the I.L.H. been and acted as an independent unit, Woolls-Sampson could no doubt have taken steps to emancipate himself from certain methods, which were a real handicap to rapid movements, and all ranks would have rallied to his wishes. The I.L.H., however, was not really an independent unit during the period of Woolls-Sampson's command and had necessarily to conform with a column's movements and depend on the cumbersome army administrative supply arrangements.' Or again, 'Woolls-Sampson did all he could to speed up,

perhaps at the cost of necessary caution when a large number of men were under his immediate control, and this led to the infliction of rather unnecessary discomfort to men and horses as regards commissariat arrangements. But who could blame him, for columns were much hampered by undue caution or comfort. His officers and men understood his motives, whilst there was some criticism of his methods, but Woolls-Sampson inspired his men to the end. Those who still survive will remember him as a man of iron will, brave as a lion, self-contained and solitary. A lonely man racing along at the head of his men, waving his stick, his poor leg dangling. Happy! When the end came—the end I mean of his career as a commander—the regiment, whilst loving him, were very emphatic about his successor being a regular officer although they themselves were very distinctly irregulars and proud of it. As to that wind-up to one phase of Woolls-Sampson's career it was a blessing indeed to the British cause, though I admit, at the moment, a blessing very heavily disguised. For had it not happened we should never have got to know Woolls-Sampson as the incomparable Intelligence Officer and fighting scout.'

Cypherfontein! Once that word made Kitchener squirm and Milner gasp: once it interrupted the career of a General, and ended by landing Woolls-Sampson in a position of greater power and responsibility; a position which, without press or public hearing very much about it, was considered of greater importance in the select circles of Valhalla up above than the affairs of any General Officer in South Africa, bar perhaps, Kitchener himself.

Here is the story of Cypherfontein: I have been so very fortunate as to have been allowed to pick it out, all alive O! simply wriggling in fact with life, from the unpublished diary of Colonel G. T. Brierly, R.A., who commanded two pom-poms attached to the I.L.H. I have transcribed it exactly, word for word, as it was roughly scribbled out that very night. To a few old soldiers it will bring a queer little shock like the sudden unexpected throb of an old wound. As if Fate had meant to add a special touch of dramatic poignancy to the destruction of that noble band of warriors, the 1st I.L.H., Cypherfontein happened just a year after Wagon Hill, amongst whose deadly rocks and stones still I can see those same brave fellows darting forward, not by order but each man on his own, in response to someone's—anyone's—cry from the fire-line of, simply: 'I.L.H.!' The Boers were now to have a bloody revenge. Let the curtain rise to the sound of muted trumpets and muffled drums:

Jan. 4. 15 miles. Marched to Reitfontein near Cypherfontein. De la Rey in the neighbourhood. General Kekewich joined us in the evening. Gordon reports enemy quite close—he being three or four miles on our right.

Jan. 5. Started 5 a.m.—an awful day for the I.L.H., and exactly a year since Wagon Hill. Very heavy mist in the morning. After marching three miles we heard heavy firing on the right, and after some time we found that our advance guard had run into Gordon and we were fighting our own men in the mist. The I.L.H., who were the main body, after remaining halted and waiting orders for some time, were suddenly ordered to occupy a

kopje on our left rear. This kopje should have been gone over by our left flank whilst we advanced; but it was not occupied by our men and we had remained for so long in position that the Boers had had plenty of time to occupy it since. Some of us did think it had been occupied by the Boers, and Yockney was particularly facetious about it. There was, however, no sign of life there—it was only about 600 yards off and was a very long hill (two miles) and rather narrow with a flat top and very long grass—a long wavy rise led up to it. Woolls-Sampson, on receiving the order to go up, was very hurried; he started off at a trot—no one knew what his intentions were. I had to gallop up to him to ask him for an escort. He said excitedly, 'the regiment is your escort'. So I did my best to keep up; but on arriving at a prospector's ditch I had to go round it, lost three hundred yards and so left one gun to follow on, and pushed on as hard as possible with the other. Major Briggs repeatedly asked Sampson to slow down and to send on scouts, and eventually these were sent on; but Sampson followed on so quickly with the remainder that the scouts were only about 100 yards ahead when the whole regiment reached the top in more or less close order in three squadrons. The hill was alive with Boers and a tremendous fire greeted them, and in two minutes they lost 55 men and 85 horses. Due to the prospector's ditch, I was fortunately just below the crest and wheeled round under cover of it—all the bullets came just over our heads like hail. I tried to come into action, but Sampson came galloping down with odds and ends of his regiment and shouted to me as he passed to gallop away, saying that the Boers were right on top of us. But they could not see me, and

did not know I was there, and I knew it, and that they were busy stripping the dead and wounded. Finally Briggs came; he was very cool and took one gun and Norman another, and we opened fire on the Boers from two new positions as they were endeavouring to get round to the convoy. Their attempt was frustrated entirely. Fired 300 rounds—Briggs and Norman helped me. One-third of the regiment had been wiped out. General Babington was terribly cut up. Boers then retreated towards Naaupoort Hill. Grey's Yeomanry went round on their left to try to outflank them, but the country was so bad they could not make much headway. Captain Glossop was very severely wounded; Captain Yockney mortally (stomach); Lieutenant Ormond and 27 men killed and 28 wounded. The pom-pom detachments were saved by the prospector's ditch delaying us, otherwise the whole section would have disappeared, as we should have been like an elephant on a billiard table had we reached the top.'

(Here the Judge). My brother told me regarding Cypherfontein that on arriving at the place he at once suggested to the General that the hill should be occupied, but that his Commander had 'jumped down his throat' and practically told him to mind his own business; but when it was too late ordered him to occupy it. He, my brother, not knowing the Boers were in possession, hurried as fast as he could to do so, knowing how important it was to have the hill before the Boers could get it, and met disaster. This was the occasion on which he demanded the court-martial, which did not come off.¹

¹Too late to alter the text I have heard to-day from General Sir Charles Briggs, the distinguished soldier mentioned above who afterwards succeeded to the command of the I.L.H. His recollection does not quite tally with the account given to the Judge, and he states that 'a Court of

After Cypherfontein Woolls-Sampson took leave to Rhodesia for a couple of months or so and when next we hear of him he is beginning that great work which no one else in the Empire could have carried out, and for which, as will be clearly understood by anyone who has followed his story so far, the whole of his previous life had been but one long preparation.

As to where and how he made his first start on this new adventure the following letter sheds an interesting light. It has been written to me, with permission to make it public, by General Sir Bindon Blood, famous in many an Indian frontier field, whose life-like photograph can be seen by any of the numerous possessors of Mr. Winston Churchill's *My Early Life*, p. 108. At the time of writing he was eighty-four.

59 CADOGAN SQUARE, S.W.1

22nd October, 1930.

'MY DEAR HAMILTON,

'I was very glad to get your letter of the 20th, and it is a pleasure to be reminded of Woolls-Sampson, who was a very good and very fine fellow.

'I first met him at Machadodorp Station on the Pretoria-Lorenzo Marquez Railway, some time in March 1901, when I was having my first look at the District I took over under Lord Kitchener's command. Woolls-Sampson was somehow at a loose end at the moment, and joined me to help in the Intelligence branch of the Staff, which I found to be in a very elementary state. He had a sort of "following" of six or seven natives, who made themselves very useful on many occasions—especially as guides. He himself was of the greatest Enquiry was held soon after this disaster under the Presidency of General Kekewich.' IAN H. 25/9/31.

guns were lost and that, apart from killed and wounded, 6 officers and 235 men were taken prisoners. The effect was far-reaching. Troops were rushed to Natal from the Western Transvaal and even from the Orange Free State. Altogether some 16,000 men and 40 guns were concentrated to help Lyttelton¹ to resist Botha and his 2000 bold raiders. Every thought was turned to defence, and the only two people who had the idea of raiding the lion's den when the lion was out a-hunting were Benson and Woolls-Sampson, with their column, which at that moment amounted to about 800 mounted men. September 10th, 15th, and 16th, they carried out night raids of 40 miles and in each case scuppered a complete Boer laager—wagons, cattle, horses, Burghers. On September 18th, the very day after Botha's resounding victory at Blood River Poort, after yet another 40 miles ride, Benson and Woolls-Sampson rushed a laager on the Umpilusi River and lifted 54 prisoners, 240 horses, and all the wagons and horses from the heart of the conquering hero's own country. And so on.

Thus just at the very moment when the scales seemed to be turning in favour of the Boers, Benson and Woolls-Sampson all alone on the high veld were at least restoring the sinking scale, if indeed they did not give it a faint tip upwards. I have a feeling that a man must have been a soldier himself, holding a responsible position in war, where actions and inactions alike become matters of life and death, to appreciate at its full value the initiative thus shown by Benson and the priceless importance of the information, advice and guidance given by Woolls-

¹The late General The Hon. Sir Neville Lyttelton then commanding in Natal.



COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA
WRITING OUT ORDERS



BOER SURRENDERS NEAR ERMELÖ

Sampson. From Kitchener downwards the mind of the Khaki Army was turned towards defence—had in fact surrendered the initiative. This tiny column restored it.

But the lion, wounded and angry, was returning to his den. Bakenlaagte was to add yet another tragic, if romantic, page to the South African history books of the future. Also it was to add quite a number of pages to the story of my association with Woolls-Sampson, for it sent me back to South Africa.

The battle was fought on 30th October 1902,¹ and Woolls-Sampson, who assumed command by common consent after the fall of Benson, was extricated with the remnants of the force by relief columns on the 1st November. On that date K., in cabling home an account of the disaster, said that if a fine column commanded by one of his best leaders and possessed of a 'most excellent and efficient Intelligence run by Woolls-Sampson', could be thus scuppered, he was at a loss to know how to carry on. Were there to be more of these mishaps the only way out would be 'a large addition to our forces to carry on the war'. This last unguarded remark put the wind right up amongst the small group of political leaders we have since learnt (heaven help us!) to call 'the Higher Direction'. For some little time past those vultures who appear from apparently nowhere as soon as a reputation is getting tired or sick or wounded had been circling in the sky above G.H.Q., Pretoria: now they plucked up

¹There is an astonishingly fine account of this battle in the *Times History of the South African War*. I say 'astonishingly fine' because it is astonishing to me that it should not be widely known and recognized by the English-speaking world as a remarkable description of magnificent conduct. By kind permission a part of it is quoted here, *vide* Appendix II.

courage and began to settle and hop in their loathsome ring round about the unconscious form of the great K. himself. From mouth to ear passed the whisper, 'He is drinking hard', (to be paralleled thirteen years later by the statement of an Australian correspondent in a dispatch written ostensibly for the Premier of the Commonwealth, actually for use by Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Lloyd George, to the effect that British officers at the Dardanelles were wallowing in ice with wounded dying of thirst all round). K.'s working Staff was not a real Staff; only a bunch of personal favourites and parasites. K. did nothing at all; K. tried to do everything himself and was killing himself with overwork.

May all future Commanders-in-Chief take to heart the word of advice I leave them here. Once you are in the field and out of personal touch think twice and three times before you trust a Home Government, a Prime Minister, or a Secretary of State for War with your innermost misgivings. Vital as it is to keep a stiff upper lip before the troops and your own Staff, it is still more vital not to let what may be a passing cloud of depression be reflected into a cable home, where it will instantly be used to effect your ruin as well as the ruin, quite likely, of your enterprise.

Whatever sediment of scandal had been precipitated by slow degrees to lie decomposing at the bottom of the stream of national discontent was brought up to the surface in one mighty swirl by K.'s unlucky phrase about 'a large addition to our forces'. This Bakenlaagte cable was, in fact, the climax, and that self-same day Lord Bobs was directed to cable in reply to Lord K. asking him if he would care to have me back again in

South Africa as his Chief of Staff. As is justly remarked in the *Life of Lord Kitchener* by Sir George Arthur the offer was made 'rather gingerly', and well it might be, seeing how sensitive was K. to anything which impinged, or might seem to impinge, upon his autocracy (as was to be evidenced later on when the forcing of Sir William Robertson upon him as a Chief of Staff gave him so great a shock that it took the heart out of his work, leaving him transformed into the mere shell of the K. of K. that was). This time, however, there was to be no forcing, and all went as happily as marriage bells. On 5th November K. replied, 'I am extremely grateful; there is nothing I should like better. He is just the man I want, Hamilton will be a great help to me . . .' So, being ready, off I started like a hundred-yards sprinter when the pistol shot is fired.

After the death of the heroic Benson the remains of his column, including Woolls-Sampson, were absorbed in Bruce Hamilton's force. My two infantry Brigadiers on the grand march up from Bloemfontein to Pretoria were Smith-Dorrien and Bruce Hamilton. At the end of the march I reported officially to Lord Roberts that Smith-Dorrien was the best man at handling infantry and for sensing when they were 'on' for a 'kopje day' or 'would rather not just then' in South Africa. Lord Roberts and Kitchener then promptly took him away from me and sent him off on his own, so I had to fight the battle of Diamond Hill without him. I rarely had cause to differ from S.-D. as to the fighting psychology of the soldier; when I did, events usually proved me wrong, just as French and Harry Wilson would have been proved wrong by the result had they prevented him from fighting at Le Cateau.

ANTI-COMMANDO

Bruce Hamilton (no relation) was a very fine fighter. Our 'fighting' Generals and Admirals, supposed to be so common, are really so uncommon; so very uncommon that we ought to cherish them more fondly. And if you ask me what is 'a fighting General', I mean a General who would always rather fight than not and always rather fight the very moment he gets touch of the enemy than the next day. Admirals—just the same. Fight to-morrow Admirals haven't got the call. When I asked K. to give me Bruce Hamilton for the command at Suvla Bay he refused, saying, 'Mr. Asquith considers Bruce Hamilton is too old.' Perhaps K. did not tell the P.M. that, under his own exact orders, the officer had to be old; *i.e.* senior to Lieut.-General Sir Bryan Mahon, then senior to any other British Divisional Commander in the field. But, had he been ninety, the man who was wont to spring forth like a seaplane from a catapult at a hint from Woolls-Sampson that there was a commando within fifty miles would hardly have lingered two days on the Suvla beaches with a weak enemy holding the hills within rifle shot of his outposts.

Here is a letter from the man who was too old to fight sixteen years ago:

'THE HALE, WENDOVER, BUCKS.,
26th October, 1930.

'MY DEAR GENERAL,

Please forgive the delay in replying to your letter about Woolls-Sampson. I wrote to Shaw asking him to refresh my memory, but I have not heard, so think my letter may have missed him. I first met Woolls-Sampson when I took over Benson's command after Bakenlaagte (about five mounted columns) and I soon



VRVHEI D, 1901
Left: Woolls-Sampson holding his magic stick
Next to him: Bruce Hamilton

realized that I had got an exceptional Intelligence Officer. He had a collection of specially chosen native scouts—mounted on specially chosen ponies. He had found great difficulty in getting reliable boys. This was only overcome by his knowledge and experience of the native character. I don't think anyone else could have got them to work so reliably as he did. He was constantly telling me how very necessary it was for them to be well mounted so that they could go long distances by night and return to camp and safety by day. As we moved about the country, with the help of those boys he found native agents in all the villages, had long talks with them, explaining what he wanted to know, gaining their confidence, and promising them rewards and safety.

'When we halted at a camp he would send off his boys at sundown, each with two horses and each told to go to the agent in a certain village, not too far away for them to be able to visit it and return after daylight. Thus next day he would have heard of any Boer commandos within a radius of about twenty-five miles from our camp. He would spend hours talking to his boys on their return, encouraging them, cross-questioning them, and checking what they told him. It was dangerous work for the boys, as the Boers killed any they caught and we found their bodies left as a warning on the veld. It was due to Woolls-Sampson's unceasing efforts to take care of his boys and gain their confidence, and to his great attention to detail that his information was so wonderfully accurate. He had an extraordinary sense of what the Boers were likely to do, and over and over again, after marching all night, we would find them at dawn almost exactly where he expected.

'As a rule by midday I would have a good knowledge of the movements of any commandos within reach—we would start the same night—with every available man, and marching all night, led by Woolls-Sampson and his boys, usually found the Boers in their camp quite unprepared in the early morning. When we came in sight of a laager Woolls-Sampson would grow quite white with excitement—mad to get at the enemy; and on these occasions it may have been no disadvantage that he was with a General of a somewhat cooler mould!¹ We had extraordinary success: surprising four or five laagers within a fortnight, taking large numbers of prisoners with their camps and belongings and huge droves of cattle. This went on for many weeks, though naturally the numbers diminished as time went on. I think it is not too much to say that we broke the Boer resistance in the Eastern Transvaal. I received by telegram the congratulations of H.M. Government and from the Commander-in-Chief at home.

'Woolls-Sampson was a quick-tempered man, but we hit it off from the first. He was always anxious that I should take every available man so as to overwhelm the commandos. This was natural, as our success depended largely on numbers. He told me that he once reported to a certain General under whom he served that the Boers would be at a certain place that night. The General replied, "Very well, I will send 300 men", and Woolls-Sampson answered, "If you only send 300 men I won't go".

'He always messed alone and spent all his time talking

¹The Judge remarks: 'My brother knew better than the General how volatile the commandos were—there was no time to be lost with them.'

to his boys and thinking what the Boers would do. We were the best of friends throughout, and it was with the greatest regret that I parted from him when he went to your command.

'I hope, my dear General, that this may be what you want. If there is anything further I can tell you please let me know.

'Yours very sincerely,

'(Signed) BRUCE HAMILTON.'

The Right Honble. Lt.-General Sir Frederick Shaw, ex-Chief Staff Officer to General Sir Bruce Hamilton, has also been kind enough to write an appreciation of Woolls-Sampson. As will be seen by the first paragraph of Sir Bruce Hamilton's letter just quoted, the two documents have been written entirely independently of one another, so the fact that one follows so closely in the footsteps of the other as to render it unnecessary to print more than one or two extracts here will make the reader's assurance doubly sure that here is a vital description of Woolls-Sampson, the great Intelligence Officer.

'I find some little difficulty in writing anything about Woolls-Sampson which would interest Sir Ian. He was, as you will remember, very self-contained, and except when actually with us on duty one saw very little of him.

'He never mixed with us in a social sense, and it was only on rare occasions that one was able to get a glimpse of his past adventures and present mode of life. He lived by himself with his white (Boer) guides and black boys near to him, and I don't think that any of us saw anything of him excepting you and me. He was above all things a most efficient Intelligence Officer. His know-

ANTI-COMMANDO

ledge of the country and its people, both white and black, enabled him to get information which others failed to do and to assess its value and reliability. I should say without fear of contradiction that he was the best Field Intelligence Officer the South African War produced. . . .

'He was a man of very strong likes and dislikes. He adored Benson, and for you he had a great regard and was most appreciative of all your activity and thrust.

'My relations and those of all our Staff with him were smooth and pleasant. I can't remember a single occasion when there was any friction between us. Some other Commanders and Staffs with whom he had served had not found favour in his sight. In fact, he would make remarks and assertions about them which were, to say the least, libellous whether true or not. . . .

'I personally liked him very much and I think so did we all.

'This is the best I can do for Sir Ian. I fear it is not much and I have no notes—they are all stowed away somewhere whilst I am away from home.'

These two letters and the extracts from Sir Frederick Shaw's letter of the 26th October, 1930, throw a clear light on Woolls-Sampson's habits and show how they struck his Commanders. As to how the Commanders struck him, that is another and a very lively question of which more anon; but I may say at once his criticisms all bore reference to the lack of vigour of the operations in Natal or to the slackness and want of any military grasp of the whole situation which, according to him, had played havoc with the operations in the West. In the Eastern Transvaal he thought the British Army had



BRUCE HAMILTON SEEKING FOR
TROUBLE WITH HIS GLASSES, 1900



LT.-COL. F. SHAW, STAFF OFFICER TO
BRUCE HAMILTON

been much more fortunate in its leaders. As to the fruits of his labours—Bruce Hamilton started on his raids a fortnight after Bakenlaagte, which was fought on 30th October, 1901. Within six weeks he had accounted for some 700 fighting Boers with hardly any loss to himself. During the next fortnight he took another couple of hundred prisoners and recovered one of Benson's guns. By the end of that time all South Africa was ringing with the dual double-names of Bruce Hamilton and Woolls-Sampson. But that second name—Woolls-Sampson—once so familiar, no longer conveys meaning to the younger generation, who, none the less, do owe him a very big debt of remembrance.

In the middle of all this I landed at Cape Town (26th November, 1901). Before leaving the steamer, two telegrams had been put into my hand; one from K. at Pretoria, 'Most welcome; hope you will leave to-night for the North'; the other from Lord Roberts, beginning 'Cabinet most anxious that you should send very full telegram with your views of the situation in Cape Town and neighbourhood as soon after you land as you can form a . . .¹ opinion, and of Cape Colony generally when you have seen French, and of the whole of South Africa when you join Kitchener.

'Never mind how long the telegram is. It is most important to know how the situation strikes you after your absence of nearly a year.

'State also what are your views as to Kitchener's health and general conditions.'²

¹Two indecipherable words.

²The last four words should be read in conjunction with the rumours referred to on page 146. I showed K. my answer and then sent it. Had it

ANTI-COMMANDO

Rather delicate! However, these happenings are not being put down as the reminiscences either of a Judge or a General but only with the object of saying as much as will, later on, be found to have a bearing on Woolls-Sampson, his decisions and his career. For had it not been for his determination of character—'nerve' some might have called it—he would (as will be seen later) have been transferred from the decisive theatre of the war, the Transvaal, and would have wasted his priceless experience and energy at Ookeep or some other hole-and-corner place in the Cape Colony.

After interviewing the Big Wigs at Cape Town, I wired French to meet me; got into the train; wrote my first cable for the Cabinet on the way up; met French at Beaufort West; had a full discussion; wired Douglas Haig to meet me at Matjesfontein; gave him my cypher cable *re* Cape Town to send off, and went on northwards. French, I should add, in explaining things, had laid stress on the weakness and unreliability of his Intelligence branch.

The very first matter upon which K. asked me to give him my opinion was a letter he had received but not yet answered from Sir John French. In this letter French had said he was most anxious to do something for Haig who had throughout the war been his right-hand man and to whom he owed more than he had so far been able to repay. As far as giving him fullest credit in dispatches, certainly he knew he had done him very well, but that praise had always been directed towards Haig's

been an answer to which he took exception naturally I must have resigned my appointment. He made no remark at all but just handed the paper back to me with a smile and a nod.—IAN H.



COMMANDANT GENERAL BOTHA CONSULTING WITH
THE COMMANDANT OF THE WAKERSTROOM COMMANDO, 1902

advisory qualities: he had, in fact, cracked him up as a Staff Officer until there was nothing more left to say. French, however, felt confident Haig also possessed the qualities of initiative and leadership. He, therefore, proposed with K.'s approval to fit him out with an independent command of his own—a mobile column of the three arms—so as to give him a chance to prove his mettle in the field. Selfishly speaking, Haig's departure would be a heavy loss to Colony Head Quarters, but he could make shift for himself, and he was sure that no scheme he could work out for quickly settling the Cape would be so successful as letting Haig loose upon it with a well-found and mobile column of his own. 'Now', said K., 'I want your advice; you've just seen these two fellows: did either of them say anything to lead you to suspect they were not getting on well together?' I shook my head. 'You know French very well', continued K. 'Is French really trying to help Haig, or is he tired of Haig and does he want to shunt him to make room for some young protégé of his own?' I replied that I felt sure French was really trying to help the show along. So that was that.

A day or two later Woolls-Sampson came into Pretoria for a few hours to see Hubert Hamilton and K.—a rare occurrence. My memory is not very clear, but I think Bruce Hamilton had just been given an Infantry Brigade on the Natal front and that Sampson was making up his mind where to go. He had not heard of my arrival, and he seemed to be as pleased to see me as I him. Rapidly he gave me a sketch of his ups and downs. As he was going I said to him: 'You must have about cleaned up the Eastern Transvaal by now: what are

you going to do next?' He said, 'I've struck a splendid lot now and I want to stick to them as long as I can. Benson was the finest commander I have ever seen or ever hope to see. Bruce Hamilton, Shaw, and all the rest of his Staff real soldiers—all for getting along with it. Hubert Gough—another always spoiling for a fight. After some of those ——— old women I served with in the West, to work alongside of soldiers who don't ride the other way when they hear of the enemy or sit down to have a nice cup of tea during a cavalry pursuit is real jam. There's heaps of work left to do in the East, and there, so help me, I stay'. 'That's all right', I replied, 'I'm not going to begin to try at this time of day to make you do anything you don't like. But if the East does dry up quicker than you expect, what do you think of going to take a drive or two round your old haunts—the Colony?' 'No, no', he said, 'French will gallop like smoke on his day but when it's an off-day he sticks his heels in and you might light a fire under him—he won't budge: besides, he's become just an ink slosher now—like you!' 'None of your insults', I made answer; 'I didn't mean French; I meant Haig. He's going to be fitted out with an AI column, and depend upon it, that's going to be *the* show'. So far he had been speaking with a humorous twinkle in his eye but now he said quite seriously, 'Haig will do nothing!' 'Why on earth not?' 'He's quite all right, but he's too—cautious: he will be so fixed on not giving the Boers a chance he'll never give himself one. If I were to go to him one evening and offer to land him at daybreak next morning within galloping distance of 1000 sleeping Boers—I know exactly what he'd do: he'd insist on sending out

someone else to make sure the Boers were really there—to make sure no reinforcements were coming up to them, and to make so dead sure, in fact, that when he did get there not a single d——d Boer would be within ten miles of him'. 'God bless you, Sampson', said I. 'God bless you, you d——d ink-slinger', said he, for he had no respect for age, virtue or rank, and so—for a while—we parted.

Naturally, Woolls-Sampson could not size up either French or Haig in their larger aspects, or see those hundred and one facets of their characters which were ultimately to bring both of them world-wide fame. Where, however, it was a question of galloping on the spur of the moment—taking a risk to surprise a sleeping enemy—there, he knew better than any other Britisher in South Africa what he was talking about. French's characteristic reactions after any big effort had not escaped Sampson. His most brilliant exploits in South Africa were followed by depression so sure as night follows day. At Elandslaagte, after exposing himself to a hail of bullets with true heroism; after obtaining a crashing and complete victory with not an unbeaten Boer within many miles, he fell back next morning on Ladysmith with such precipitation that the withdrawal became a skedaddle: the victorious force looking over their shoulders at the blank horizon, and the last train especially seeming to be rather filled with fugitives than conquerors. I have referred to this already in another context, but it is worthy of note again here, because an *idée fixe* of Woolls-Sampson's, and of not a few others also, was that our victorious cavalry at Elandslaagte, after they had cut down most of the flying enemy, should have pressed

on after the remaining fugitives and carried on over the unoccupied Biggarsberg Pass; blown up the Ingagene Bridge, and cut off the communication between Pretoria and Joubert's army. However, to return to the strange reactions of French: what was the most splendid feat of leadership performed by French during the war? Undoubtedly the Klip Drift charge through to Kimberley. That was his day. The whole thing went slap-bang like the Valkyrie Ritt. Who seeing that could possibly imagine that Klip Drift would be followed by Poplar Grove, where the pursuit was like 'Peace, Perfect Peace' played on a bad organ whilst the whole Boer army was allowed to escape to the sounds of the *Te Deum* being sung by the British mounted troops. No doubt these things were in Woolls-Sampson's mind when he spoke of French galloping one day and sticking in his heels the next; but what opportunity he had of judging Haig's character I do not know as, for one thing, until then Haig had never commanded.

On reading this over I feel that some may take it as a depreciation of the late Lord Haig. I do not think Woolls-Sampson meant to convey this; all he meant to say was that his own methods would not be acceptable to Douglas Haig. As for myself, I yield to no one in my admiration as a professional soldier for Haig's wonderful career. Not only that, but he was always very kind to me. But the point I want to make has nothing personal about it, and it is a point to which statesmen should give attention; it is this: different wars make different demands upon commanders. There is no such thing as a sealed pattern Commander-in-Chief. To show that the matter demands some elucidation, I

would like to draw attention to criticisms which have been levelled several times quite lately against the judgment of the late Field Marshal, the Earl of Ypres, because he wrote after the manœuvres of 1912 that neither Haig nor Grierson was what he would call 'a dasher,' and then went on to prophesy that certainly Haig and perhaps Grierson would 'always shine more and show to greater advantage as superior Staff Officers than as Commanders'. Speaking in the light of the qualities of a Commander as exemplified by the wars of past history, up to and including the South African War, Lord Ypres was right. Where he went perfectly wrong, as most of us would have gone wrong at that date, was in his estimate of what sort of demands would be made upon Commanders by the huge forces to be deployed in static warfare on the Western Front. Amongst those qualities 'dash' played no part, and thus Haig found himself admirably equipped for his rôle as Commander-in-Chief where a super Staff Officer was precisely what was needed. But wars of the future will not—obviously will not—follow the model of the war on the Western Front. Therefore do please, Mr. Tom Shaw, spare a thought or two from knocking harmless little military cadets on the head, to think of whom you mean to put in as Head of your Army when it takes the field.

So Woolls-Sampson stuck to his Eastern Transvaal a bit longer. After so many days it is not easy (most people having shuffled off this mortal coil in double quick time), to follow his movements in December and January. Hubert Gough tells me that when Sampson was attached to his column during this period for a

spell, he began by leading him straight on to the top of a laager, making him a handsome present, to pass on in due course to Kitchener, of round about 100 fighting Boers. 'In fact', Sir Hubert added, 'it was about my best scoop in those parts.' Now and then I caught a glimpse of Woolls-Sampson and heard his news, but I was very busy and the first meeting that comes clearly back into my mind is one which took place soon after the 'complete disaster' to von Donop's convoy on the 25th February, 1902. This was indeed a 'regrettable incident' with a vengeance, seeming to show above everything a complete lack of prevision, or 'Intelligence', which comes to much the same thing. To tempt Providence may be permissible, now and then, but to tempt de la Rey at that stage of the war really was not. Long afterwards von Donop was to keep a very close eye on the issue of ammunition to the Dardanelles, but this time, owing to the faulty 'intelligence' at his command, both his eyes were closed, so much so that de la Rey was able to take just as many rounds as he could carry away, a most lucky affair for the Boers as ammunition was their most desperate need. The von Donop catastrophe was followed ten days later, on the 7th March, 1902, by the crashing defeat of the brave and untiring Methuen at Tweebosch, where de la Rey captured six guns and a good supply of shell, as well as 600 prisoners, rifles, and enough fresh cartridges to last him—together with the von Donop supply—for several months more fighting. I can't tell exactly how folk felt about all this in England. At Pretoria I do know it really almost seemed as if everything might crash back into chaos. In fact, the whole issue of the war seemed now to hinge

on the Western Transvaal. Under K.'s instructions, Woolls-Sampson was at once shifted over there to join Kekewich, whom he had always liked. He was quite keen about it for he realized better than most where the shoe pinched.

Kitchener, though giving no outward sign of anxiety, was actually very much upset. What vexed him more than anything else was the half-million rounds of ammunition and all the good mules and horses lifted by de la Rey from von Donop's convoy. That this should have happened just at the time his peace negotiations were getting on so nicely made him mad. He had been, for long, keenly aware that the war was being prolonged by the carelessness of the British rank and file as well as that of the South African and overseas contingents. Hundreds of rounds of rifle ammunition were picked up on the tracks and in the camps of British columns on trek. The thought of this perpetual leakage perpetually played upon the mind of the great K. Indeed one of the happiest of my retrospects in South Africa is the thought that I had vigorously helped his own better nature to combat a terrible temptation placed in his path by a General known to those who knew him as Old Nick. This was the suggestion that the ordnance at home should specially manufacture a few hundreds of cartridges, facsimiles of the ordinary cartridge, but loaded with dynamite and a detonator instead of cordite and a percussion cap. A few of these would be scattered about the camping ground of columns, and when they were fired by the Boers the result would be blindness or mutilation, or perhaps death. To my mind this stood very much on a level with the poisoning of wells, and

Heaven be praised, K. never touched it; but I mention the fact to let the seriousness of the loss of the ammunition column be fully realized. Now, as he cabled home to the British Government, peace had become pretty hopeless until this last big flare-up of the Boers had been definitely extinguished. Therefore he added, 'I am doing all in my power to hit de la Rey as hard as possible, and hope soon to succeed'. To carry out his promise he assembled those he considered to be his crack Generals and Colonels—about a dozen in all—although one or two of them were, in my private opinion, rather crocks than cracks. The 16,000 mounted men they commanded were, however, certainly the cream of the Service. A finer crowd it would not be easy to imagine, and of all of these the two apples of K.'s two eyes at that moment were the newly formed bodies of Mounted Infantry drawn from the Royal Horse Artillery and the Canadians.

The columns soon set to work, each at the end of a wire to Pretoria, moving under K.'s own orders, to drive through de la Rey's country. K. gloried in this. He was like one of those stage performers who plays six instruments at once. I could no longer drag him out for his half-hour's afternoon ride. At first the combined columns met with some slight success—a few captures, but nothing in the least commensurate to their strength. De la Rey, however, was now about to give K. what was destined to be the shock of his life until the *Hampshire* should strike upon a mine in the cold North Sea.

K.'s superb 16,000 cavaliers galloping over the West on spanking fine horses—never was such a time before

and never will be again—had been organized in four principal columns, each column being made up of three or four smaller units. There was no Commander of the force as a whole—no General Officer Commanding in Chief. There were two unifying principles or guides which might, or might not, unify. One was the Intelligence supplied by Aubrey Woolls-Sampson. But each column, bar that of Kekewich, had its own minor prophet; and very often Woolls-Sampson's Intelligence was only partially acted upon. The other was the shower of telegrams from Pretoria. This was an idiosyncrasy of K.'s which was to show itself again thirteen years later when he put Egypt, the military base of the Dardanelles Expedition, under one independent General, responsible to and corresponding direct with himself, whilst the General fighting at Gallipoli could only approach his own base through himself—Lord Kitchener. In their drives, marches and manoeuvres K. worked over the wires direct with the four principal columns, and twice a day at least, and sometimes half a dozen times a day, gave them their orders. K. was perfectly enchanted with the game of making his Generals dance at the end of wires like so many marionettes. But even if we had in those days possessed the wireless, his pernicious system could never have succeeded. To K.'s thinking the *ne plus ultra* of scientific warfare would have been attained had he only been able to carry on conversations with his Generals right into the middle of the battle—but, had he actually been able to attain that wish, the only result would have been the destruction, column by column, of the whole of the British Army in South Africa.

Now for de la Rey's grand slam! At 2 p.m. on the

31st March, Woolls-Sampson having located de la Rey as being somewhere about Barber's Pan, Walter Kitchener, brother to K., commanding one of the four principal columns, sent out Colonel Cookson with K.'s precious pets, the Royal Horse Artillery Mounted Rifles; their close runners-up, the Canadian Rifles; the 28th M.I.R., a comparatively newly formed unit; four guns, and some other details, to reconnoitre. To squeeze a thriller into three or four dry lines: after covering thirty-five miles Cookson bumped into the enemy, fought for a bit, was thrown on the defensive and was rounded up—not defeated, but rounded up in the hollow of the broad shallow depression which in that level country went by the name of the Brak Spruit Valley. He couldn't get out alone and required help to extricate himself. Walter Kitchener, with his big column, was coming lumbering along after Cookson, and had got within twenty miles of him when he heard the firing. He at once halted (which was funny but characteristic). Having done so, he sent out Colonel Lowe's column to try and find out what was happening and to get into touch if possible with Cookson. (These, it may be remarked *en passant*, were just the sort of tactics Woolls-Sampson abominated.) Half way towards the firing Lowe met some of Cookson's 28th Mounted Infantry on the run. These fugitives reported (as is the invariable practice of fugitives; of people who have helped wounded men back from the firing line [often a dozen for each wounded man]; of people who have been sent back with a message, and of all sorts of people, in fact, who have to explain away their own conduct) that Cookson had been entirely cut up—not cut off but cut up. The firing

in front had ceased; the silence was more impressive than the sound; Lowe fell back on Walter Kitchener's main body and reported that Cookson and his column had ceased to be—were wiped out! Walter Kitchener, though minus Cookson, still commanded a force large enough to have taken on de la Rey single-handed. However, the one thing he was not going to take on was risk: at once he sent off two wires: one to Rawlinson asking for help; the other to K. telling him his beloved R.H.A. and Canadian Mounted Rifles were no more. But the extraordinary bad luck for everyone (except me and Woolls-Sampson) was still to come. As if that miserable message had been too much for the wires they broke down completely within five minutes of its delivery, and for forty solid hours refused to be repaired!

The effect on K. was to be a revelation. This K. of K. whom the British public with their queer flair for the Superman (however quaintly or cunningly he may disguise himself) have detected and hailed a national hero,—this inarticulate, talkative, uneducated, occasionally violent K.—and they are right! Whenever it came to back to the wall business he became a king amongst his colleagues whoever they might be. Unfortunately, his character, which had grown up, so to say, 'on its own' in the desert places of the Near East, was so vitiated by streaks of ignorance, innocence, suspicion, secretiveness and, often too, by downright duplicity, that he was liable to be bowled over by any smart lawyer-like personage. So it was always on the cards he would be scuppered before he ever reached the grand issue he had foreseen—as happened during the Great War. Anyway, it was one of Sir Herbert

Kitchener's most precious idiosyncrasies that he could be reckoned on to keep as cool as a cucumber and perfectly cheery and self-confident under one heavy stroke of misfortune on another. And now it was to be shown that, all the time, he had never been as cool as a cucumber but quite another proposition, a bundle of nerves kept under control by an iron will! Either that will was beginning to get worn out or else, just for this once, the utter unexpectedness of a rapier thrust of fate got clean under his guard and ran him right through. During the hour or two which elapsed between the time when his brother's wire came to hand and his hearing definitely that the line was not working and that there was no saying how long it would take to repair, he and I sat opposite one another at his office table; Hubert Hamilton coming in now and then with some urgent piece of business, only to be impatiently waved away. From the few remarks K. let drop from time to time it was clear he regarded his Column Commanders in the West as babes in the wood when deprived of his guiding telegrams. The suspense was pretty bad. At last came the definite announcement that we were clean cut off for an unknown time. At that K. rose from his chair, went straight up to his room, and refused for the best part of two days and two nights to touch a bite. Not one single crumb. Only a rare cup of tea, and an absolute refusal to utter one word on business. We of the inner circle were aghast. Hubert Hamilton, his Military Secretary, was here, as ever, a great stand-by. (Had he been by K.'s side in 1915 what a different war!) When I was at my wits' end what to do, and even harboured thoughts of consulting some outsider, he urged me for

my own sake as well as K.'s—for everyone's sake in fact—to put on a bold face to the outside world and the outside part of G.H.Q. and to carry on as if everything was quite normal. So Henderson of the Intelligence and Girouard of the Railways, who were the only two he made a point of seeing daily, were warned off on some pretext or another, and no one for a moment suspected that we, inmates of the house—Hubert Hamilton, Military Secretary, Marker of the Guards, Maxwell of the Bengal Cavalry—were carrying on as it might be in a novel, receiving orders, issuing orders, and cabling even to England. The Adjutant General and the others I saw just as usual; also the Press. They all saw the telegrams spread out upon the billiard table every morning, but this particular telegram of Walter Kitchener's was taken off the file. The agony lasted just forty hours. The moment the wires were working again we received the good news that Cookson and the bulk of his column had held off the Boers with a loss of 78 men (mostly Canadians) and 400 horses and mules. The Boers had got decidedly the best of it, but there had been no calamity beyond an exhibition of bad generalship, and to that we were thoroughly well accustomed. The nation was paying monstrous sums to keep its army of horse-men in the field. They were being kept there to fight. Walter Kitchener thought his reconnoitring column had been scuppered. On insufficient evidence—but never mind about that—he did think so. Still, surely there were the guns, the prisoners, and presumably the wounded to be tended and the dead to be buried? This was the sort of generalship which formerly, in the West, had driven Woolls-Sampson half crazy. Of course

if a General is specifically ordered, for reasons of high politics, not to fight, as happened at least once during the Great War, the poor devil can't help himself.

So the sun shone again and all seemed as before—though it never is! Next morning as K. and I were at our usual task of opening telegrams (all operations telegrams were addressed to K. himself by name instead of to his Chief of Staff as they should have been) he handed me one with the remark, 'See what that ass Rawly¹ is saying'. The telegram was from Harry Rawlinson and said something like the following: 'We can't carry on any longer without someone on the spot to hold us together. Can't you send us Ian Hamilton?' K. said nothing more and I said nothing at all. Next morning he tossed me another telegram out of his bundle saying, 'Here is that ass of a brother of mine supporting that ass Rawlinson'. Those were the very words. Again I said nothing. Next morning K. said, 'You had better go out to the Western Transvaal'. The whole story of how I departed without any instructions at all, and not knowing even whether I was meant to stay out and take command or to inspect and come back with a report to K., has been told by me already—I forget where. Anyway it lies too far off the line of Woolls-Sampson's career to be in its proper setting here. But I have dug out the carbon of an old letter of mine dictated from the field to Lord Roberts. The writing is insipid because I suspected it might be passed round the Cabinet. But it should still interest South Africans; it has never seen the light until now, and it shows in an original and complete form how magnificently the Boers came on and went down in this

¹Afterwards General Lord Rawlinson.

their last battle; also, how much hung on Intelligence; how in this case the Boer Intelligence for once failed them and how Aubrey Woolls-Sampson's guidance was, as usual, a godsend to the British. The only man I consulted in deciding on my plan of campaign was Woolls-Sampson. K. was told but he vouchsafed no reply. So I took his silence for consent. I had no other Staff whatsoever except my shorthand type-writing Aide-de-Camp, Victor Brooke of the 9th Lancers, to whose industry in having learnt shorthand and typing whilst he had lain on the sick list with a pelvis broken by a steeplechase fall, I owe it that the carbon about to be quoted exists. As is pretty well known I started for the Dardanelles with almost a blank cheque in the way of instructions, but I did at least have signed authority to say I was to take command of the actual expedition, though not, as it turned out, of its base in Egypt. Here, however, I had no written instructions at all. Perhaps it may be said as Chief of Staff I needed no written instructions. Yes, but I had no verbal instructions either, not even as to whether I was to inspect on behalf of K. or grip hold of the chief command of all the columns. In my mind I had determined to do the latter, and so before starting from Pretoria I had wired Woolls-Sampson to come out and meet me at rail-head. Oddly enough it so happens that I have just chanced upon an entry in the diary lent me by Colonel G. T. Brierley which shows that he acted upon the order. Here is the entry: 'April 8th. Marched at 7 a.m. to Deeikiul. Ian Hamilton and Sampson came with us...' (and a pretty scoop it would have been for the Boers if a commando or two had rounded us up as they might so easily have done!).

But before I 'put in' the carbon of my letter to Lord Roberts I would like to state another reason for laying stress on this picturesque wind-up to the campaign; fitting pendant to the first battle of Elandslaagte, where I had fought as comrade-in-arms with Woolls-Sampson and also to Bakenlaagte where he had stood by and succeeded Benson in the only other action of the war which might be put as Bakenlaagte the other way about. The point I wish to make is that Roodewal has been the most striking example of the force of journalism in war time that ever came to my notice until the day when an irresponsible Australian journalist was to write an imaginary account of the situation at the Dardanelles and get it published and circulated to Editors and Cabinet Ministers as a State paper. And although at Roodewal the working of the oracle was to be only negative, still there is no more powerful press weapon than that of omission. Had the whole future of South Africa hung upon that encounter (as indeed I think it did so far as the people of England were concerned), it simply did not happen at all until 1907 when the fifth volume of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* was published. 'By their deeds ye shall know them.' Yes! But short of the Almighty Himself how is a simple citizen to get to know the deeds against the veto of a Northcliffe, or, in his more genial way, of a Burnham? Not that there was anything sinister or calculated in the total eclipse of Roodewal. Although the finest British fighting force yet seen in South Africa—a force which, whether in fire effect or movement, would have made rings round the slow, cumbrous brigades of regular cavalry or infantry of 1900-1901—although this magnificent body was

out upon the war path and although South Africa was still swarming with war correspondents, there was not one single one of them on the spot at Roodewal. Partly this was because the pith of the plan was kept in two heads only—Woolls-Sampson's and mine; partly because the war correspondents had been irresistibly drawn far from the pivotal point of action to Pretoria and Vereeniging. The peace negotiations were impending, and the fact that the key to the peace negotiations issue lay out upon the Brak Spruit simply did not strike them.

Thus there was never to be a story of Roodewal until 1907, by which time the world and his wife had been entirely fed up with war books and had decided to scrap the lot for good and all. Had not King Edward enjoyed a banquet with the Kaiser at Wilhelmshohe; had he not followed it up by a good lunch with M. Clemenceau at Marienbad and, last but not best, had there not been a Peace Conference at the Hague which had led, in the words of the best-known historian of the period, to 'absolutely pacific hopes', though how a 'hope' which is a mixture of expectation and desire, a relative, indeterminate longing, can become 'absolute' perhaps Mr. Einstein may know. This was 1907. Rather like to-day. Our War Office and our Admiralty are again being led by 'absolutely pacific hopes'. Our Foreign Secretary has been lunching with Briand, just as Lord Grey of Falloden would have done. No doubt he will end by dining with Hindenburg. Mr. Tom Shaw, our *rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno*,¹ our pacifist War

¹The rarest bird on earth, something like a black swan. This was before Australia was discovered, and shows how careful poets should be.

Minister, has been addressing trades unionists in Germany, speaking alternately in perfect French and German (so the reporter says), almost like St. Paul, only more so. I hope he told them how he had crushed those young vipers, those budding Stahlhelms the British Cadets. *Plus ça change plus ça reste la même chose.* Meanwhile here is my letter to Lord Bobs:

'KLERKSDORP,
'18th April, 1902.

'MY DEAR LORD ROBERTS,

'I fear I missed last mail, but as I was covering about 35 miles a day at the time, there was no help for it.

'You know how averse Lord Kitchener has always been to having a Chief Commander to the various assorted columns which usually work together. He holds that he can control matters equally well from Pretoria. If he was not who he is, I would differ very strongly with him. However this may be, in the Western Transvaal things reached a climax by the Column Commanders themselves sending a sort of round-robin to Lord K. asking that I personally might be sent down to take immediate direction of operations. [A personal interjection is here omitted.]

'Well, I came along with a different equipment from a Lieutenant General in the old days, who, with his Staff of A.A.G.'s, D.A.A.G.'s, signallers, provost marshals, supply officers and Intelligence, used to constitute a small army by himself.¹ My staff was my A.D.C., Victor

¹How much worse this curse of swollen staff establishments was predestined to become in what we call the Great War everyone now knows.—IAN H.

Brooke, and my impedimenta was a Cape cart—*voilà tout*. The fact is Column Commanders have got so practical and experienced nowadays, that all these grand Staff Officers, whose function it is to give minute instructions, have become quite superfluous. All the General wants to do is to live in close proximity to the best Intelligence Officer with the combined forces, and give clear orders from the strategical and tactical point of view. He need bother about very little else, except of course that he has to bear in mind how the supplies are going, and what is the state of the horses.

'I need not trouble you much about my operations, which, as soon as I had put them forward, were accepted by Lord K. without any demur. My idea was to drive down south, on a very broad front, from the Noodhulp (193) Driekuyl line on to a second line, with our right resting on the junction of the Brak Spruit and Harts River, and our left at Klip Drift (7); thence to move south about half a day's march. We¹ hoped the enemy would be frightened of being squeezed against the line of the Vaal, and would break out round our left flank into their favourite area between Driekuyl, Middlebult and the Klerksdorp, Buffelsvlei, Vaalbank blockhouse line. I then meant to swing round and make a fifty to sixty miles drive in one day bang into Klerksdorp, with my right flank resting on the Vaal, and my left flank on the blockhouse line.

'On the 11th, however, my plans were interrupted by one of the most picturesque, and I think I may fairly

¹'We' here meant Woolls-Sampson and myself. I did not enter into these details in my telegrams (for my one-sided communications were all by wire) to Kitchener.—IAN H., 1931.

say important, actions pertaining to this latter period of the war.

'Kekewich was to have been on the right of my line on the Brak Spruit, and to have extended his right up to the junction of that spruit with the Groot Harts River. Owing to some misunderstanding, however, he encamped in the middle of the day at Oshoek (181), which brought him in rear of Rawlinson's extended right. I had accordingly to make him inspan and trek, but as he had already covered a considerable distance I did not like to send him out to cover the full extent of ground originally intended.

'That afternoon information pointed to the bulk of the enemy being some distance south, near Vleesch Kraal (97). In fact, they had shown themselves there in such numbers, and with such unusual ostentation that I felt almost sure that, whatever else they might do, they would not attack Walter Kitchener, who was in front of them. During the night, the concentration I had observed was joined by practically all available fighting men of the Western Transvaal, and to show you the scope of such a summons, 200 Boers from the Marico, under Celliers, only missed the fight by an hour or two. This demonstrates to you what these people can do when they think they have a soft thing on.

'On the morning of the 11th, at 7.30, Kekewich was moving down the Brak Spruit to get his proper distance—he had just reached Rooiwal (156)—when a report was received by him from the officer commanding his advanced guard, that a large column was to be seen advancing from the south, and asking for information whether it could be any of our own columns. Hardly had

this message come in, when large bodies of the enemy pushed home their attack on the screen and supports, passing right over them, and using magazine fire from horseback. This brought the enemy within 700 yards of the main body. The Boers were riding knee to knee, and in some places two deep, the centre moving slowly to give time for the flanks to envelop Kekewich. Grenfell, at this juncture, had just completed arrangements for guarding the convoy, and came quickly forward with his men, the S.A.C.,¹ Scottish Horse, and 5th I.Y.² Kekewich dismounted these men, and advanced them towards the enemy, under a very heavy, but strange to say, inaccurate fire. At this moment I was approaching the scene of action, and I must say I do not think I ever remember hearing guns, rifles and pom-poms going at it with greater celerity, and as it turned out with less precision.

'By the time Grenfell's troops had dismounted and advanced a few yards, the attack was in full swing, the Boer flanks enveloping Kekewich on two sides by a line of skirmishers firing heavily, while the main body was cantering slowly forward, and was only some 600 yards distant from the convoy. The Boers came on from here with surprising vigour and determination, and it was not until they had reached, in some places, one hundred yards from our men, that they had to give way. The great majority of the Boer dead were found in the line of this charge. I got hold of Kekewich himself about this time, told him to park his convoy as quick as he could, and come on south, along the Groot Harts River in pursuit of the enemy. I then started off with Rawlinson

¹South African Constabulary.

²Imperial Yeomanry.

about three miles east of Kekewich, in a direction also parallel to that river. I forgot to say that I am by no means sure that the Boers would have actually fled, had it not been for the promptitude with which Briggs, of Rawlinson's column, threw the Imperial Light Horse in a direction by which they must fall on the flank of the Boers, unless they cleared right back.

'All these arrangements took a little time, and I doubt if we would ever have got touch with the Boers again, had it not been that they were quite persuaded that, after so hot a fight, we would wait at least twenty-four hours to put things ship-shape again, as was, so they said, the invariable custom of the British. When, therefore, our scouts began to gallop towards them, they stood firm at first, thinking they were only outposts sent to make the camping ground secure. As, however, the long line of some eight miles in width came rolling up over the veldt, they thought it was time to be off, their direction, to the extent of perhaps one-third of the force, leading them rather to the west, so that, as was right and proper and satisfactory, they fell into the hands of Kekewich.

'At the moment I ordered a general advance I sent a telegram to Walter Kitchener, telling him to swing round on Vleesch Kraal, so as to intercept the flight of any of the enemy who might make for Wolmaranstad. At the moment when the guns inclined westwards, falling to Kekewich and clearing the front of Rawlinson, another portion—some 600 men with impedimenta of sorts—diverged due south, thus also clearing Rawlinson's front, but apparently destined, beyond doubt, to fall into Walter Kitchener's hands, who had, I knew, received my message. This, however, was not to be.

Through some mistake or inability of Cookson's, who had seen my telegram, he did not come quite as far west as Vleesch Kraal, but moved down towards Spion Kop, on a line just about three miles east of the former place.

'After we had got to Nooitgedacht, and could go no further, we saw streams of Boers passing through Vleesch Kraal and Makouwspan between 2 and 3 p.m. Walter Kitchener's force was at that time actually south of them, but was moving parallel with them, separated by thick bush, and never saw them. It was provoking, but such things always happen. These 600 had not a kick left in them, and I think their capture would have ended the campaign. Similarly a good company of infantry, lying down and firing from near the convoy in Kekewich's fight, would equally have ended the campaign, by killing at the very least 300 Boers. This is Kekewich's own estimate, and he is a very moderate-spoken fellow.

'We learned from the prisoners that they had been by no means downcast or demoralized by the result of their fight with Cookson and Keir, a few days previously; on the contrary, they maintained that Cookson and Keir must have surrendered in due course, owing to the relative position of the forces, had not the advance of Walter Kitchener led them to fear his intervention.

'As a matter of fact I think myself that the Boers were quite right. Cookson and Keir were in much the same sort of a place as Cronje was at Paardeberg, only a good deal worse, as the Brak Spruit afforded practically no cover: there was bush cover in abundance, for the long-range fire of the enemy, and there was also a command

of ground for the Boers from all directions, except due east and west along the bed of the so-called stream.

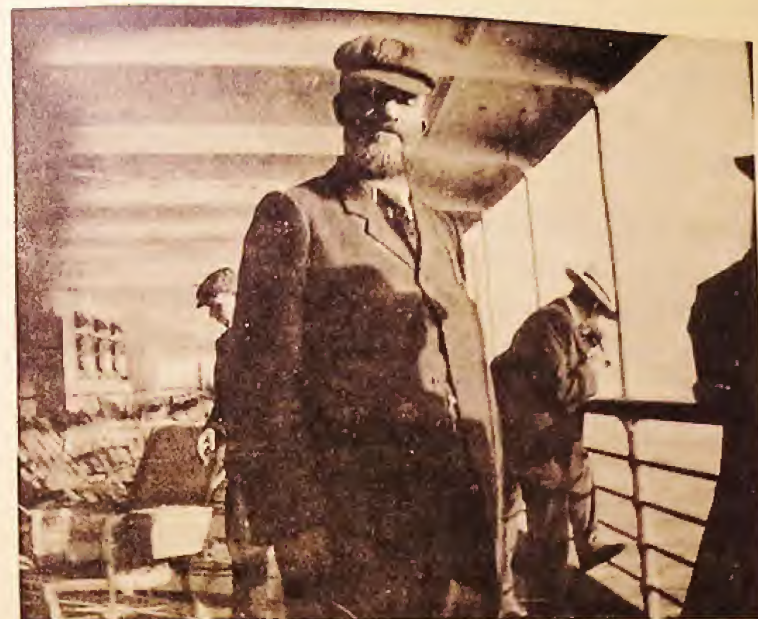
'I think it was a good fight, and if you wanted to please the troops who have had a peculiarly hard time, I should give them a clasp for Brak Spruit, which would include the previous action fought by Keir and Cookson, who suffered pretty heavily, and though they did not succeed in demoralizing the enemy, at least took it out of him in killed and wounded.

'After this, we had to get back to Driekuyl and Middlebult for supplies, and after manoeuvring a bit, so as to give the enemy a false impression, suddenly made a line from the Vaal on one side to Vaalbank on the other, and drove into Kerksdorp in one day, Walter Kitchenier's column covering sixty-five miles, the others about fifty, as the crow flies. The result was thoroughly satisfactory, producing sixty-four prisoners of a very superior sort without any loss on our side whatever.

'Thank you very much for yours of 21st March. I cannot at all follow the mind of anyone who thinks that batteries of Horse and Field Artillery can be used without escorts. It is possible, of course, that in a great, set, European line of battle, batteries might not need any escort, as they would be jammed in between Infantry Divisions or Cavalry Brigades: but in this war I would lose my two guns every rear-guard action I fought, if I had not a specially told off body of men to look after them. I will ask Sclater about this on the first opportunity.

'Best love to Her Ladyship and the Girls. It will soon be getting time now for me to write them another letter.

'Yours affectionately.'



CHRISTIAN DE WET SAILING TO ENGLAND



GENERAL CHRISTIAN DE WET AND GENERAL HART
AS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

Roodewal was the last battle. Had Roodewal not gone right the war would have gone wrong. As it is, 'the direct sequel to Roodewal was the final shaking of hands between Boers and British'.¹

And what a sequel to shake hands upon! There's been no better in the birth of nations bar perhaps the battle of Hastings. Winston Churchill has painted the death of barbarism and the entry of civilization into the Sudan by showing us the charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman in colours so vivid that the whole educated world, from the Pope of Rome all alone in his superb but deadly isolation to the Bolshevik firmly wedded to bugs, lice and all the unspeakable promiscuity of the loathsome tenement, will be able to get away into the realms of glorious adventure. There they can visualize Winston on his charger looking at his massed Dervishes dancing about on their feet and shaking their long spears up and down—the glory of war and not one iota of its dangers. Oh! that this same Winston had stuck to the path of glory until Roodewal, and could now snatch my pen from my hand to make the Boers charge home once more and Potgieter once again ride straight into the realms of glory. Potgieter, foremost of the brave; leader of the Burghers of Rustenburg, West Pretoria and Krugersdorp. Potgieter in his blue shirt leading a line of 1200 Boers—the pick of the back-veld—at a steady canter, over ground that could not give cover to a mouse; straight—a mile and a half in bright sunlight—at a massed column of 1500 British bayonets and another similar massed column standing by in support. Every rifle, pom-pom and field gun that can be

¹*Life of Kitchener*, by Sir George Arthur.

ANTI-COMMANDO

brought to bear is firing for dear life. The charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava was child's play to this. Miraculously—incredibly—on and on they come until Potgieter falls with a bullet through his brain only seventy yards from the centre of the Scottish Horse.

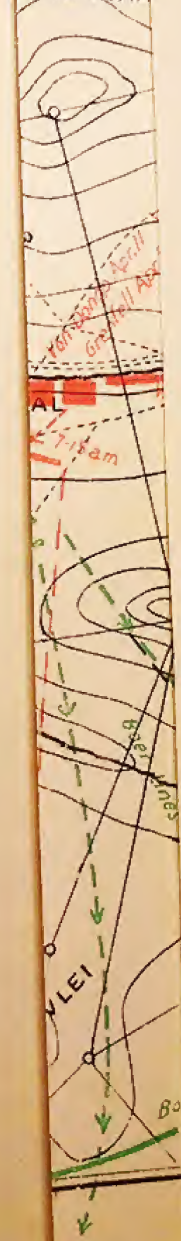
When we buried these heroes we did so as reverently as if they had been comrades. Woolls-Sampson was there—a lion's share of the victory was his—there amongst those graves in the far Western Transvaal ends his military career.¹

The last paragraph of my official Dispatch to the Commander-in-Chief announcing this victory runs as follows:

'I would also specially draw attention to the valuable services of Colonel Kekewich, who is a Commander of rare judgment and ability; of Colonel Woolls-Sampson (spelt thus), who is a brave soldier as well as an unrivalled Intelligence Officer; and of Captain Victor Brooke, who has been my only Staff Officer during these operations.'

¹The Natal disturbances of 1906 are left out of account. They were more police work than soldiering.

DIAMANTAA



CHAPTER IV

K. FORGETS

OUR friend Aubrey, for so let us hope he has come to be looked upon by ex-enemy Boers as well as by Britons—was now going to try his luck in paddling his own canoe down the Great Peace River; not the Canadian stream which bears that auspicious name but the normal civilized existence which looks smooth enough on the surface when compared with the cataracts of war but underneath holds more snags than water. How was he fitted out for the task? Not long before the war, when Woolls-Sampson was thinking of trekking once and for all to Rhodesia, he wrote to Cecil Rhodes acquainting him with his intention, and offering his services to him as a mining expert in any mining business, adding to his letter this notable postscript, 'Nothing shady of course'. Rhodes was tickled to death at the naïve proviso and said to me, 'He is a fanatic, a fanatic', adding, after a pause, in his inimitably reflective way, 'but nothing is ever done in this world except by fanatics'. Woolls-Sampson had nothing against Rhodes—not one thing—but he could tell some dark tales about one or two men who have to-day wangled themselves into a position whence they can patronize the military virtues of constancy and self-sacrifice, whereas during those trying South African days these self-same magnates

ANTI-COMMANDO

were sitting on the fence and playing a double game between Milner and the Boers until they were quite certain which way the cat was going to jump. Therefore, naturally enough, he had come to have a general suspicion of South African financiers. He had already quarrelled with some of his best friends in regard to things he considered shady in financial operations, and had gained for himself the reputation of being a quixotic crank. But meticulous honesty ran in his blood; it belonged to the unbending independence of his forbears, their pride, and their aloofness from the methods of the market place. Through his veins there pulsed the true soldier strain. When putting most of his money—and by this time he was a comparatively rich man—into a promising gold venture in Madagascar he had occasion on some suspicion to visit that country and see for himself whether the glowing reports were true. Very soon he discovered that the prospectus was a ramp and that the samples of ore exhibited in South Africa were as strange to the climate of Madagascar as Denys Reitz was to become familiar with it. So he at once wrote to the directors of the company in Johannesburg, not only informing them of the facts but adding that he had sent sealed letters to the principal newspapers at Johannesburg with the news, directing the letters to be opened and the facts published if, by 12 o'clock of the day of arrival, the directors had not published the fraud. This he did to prevent any selling of shares by the members of the company before the public became aware of the facts. He himself lost a large sum of money by this proceeding, having taken up a great number of shares on the strength of the favourable samples.



GENERAL DE LA REY SAILING TO ENGLAND



COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA
SAILING TO ENGLAND

After the Boer War his last service was in the native rebellion in Natal in 1906. In a long letter to the newspapers vindicating the name of Colonel McKenzie as the determining factor in the suppression of that rebellion, he says: 'During the Boer War, from what came under my observation, I brought Colonel McKenzie's name to the notice of Lord Kitchener, as I felt his services entitled him to an independent command, and it was the recollection of his work during that war which prompted me—at the outbreak of the Natal rebellion—to voluntarily serve under Colonel McKenzie, without any cost to the colony of Natal, although I was his senior both in years and rank.'

This shows the old spirit. It was his love of justice also which prompted him to put the public right as to the part played by Colonel McKenzie in the successful line of strategy taken by him, approved as it was by General Stephenson who was watching on behalf of the Imperial Government. Woolls-Sampson himself at first acted as McKenzie's Chief of Staff, and later was one of his Column Commanders. He was through the whole of the operations ending in the surrounding of the Nkandla forest.

Of Colonel McKenzie as a Commander he writes: 'Since the year 1876 I have served with most of the principal British Officers who have conducted campaigns in South Africa, and I have almost invariably found that my knowledge of the country and its people have enabled me to make suggestions to commanders during the progress of any particular set of operations. In the case of Colonel McKenzie I should like to place it on record that I found myself unable to suggest any-

thing he had not already thought of, and on every occasion the conception of the whole plan of attack was Colonel McKenzie's alone; he never consulted anyone as to the plans of strategy, but having decided upon his course of action, he would consult with me and other Commanders in regard to the details for carrying out action.'

In 1906 he forwarded to Lord Roberts a casket and album, subscribed for by the Imperial Light Horse, which Lord Roberts acknowledged in the following letter on 28th January, 1907:

'DEAR WOOLLS-SAMPSON,

'I ought long ago to have thanked you for your letter of the 19th November and to have told you of the safe arrival of the casket and album.

'I cannot tell you how greatly Lady Roberts and I appreciate them. The casket is extremely handsome and the album with the signatures of so many of the gallant fellows who volunteered to fight for the flag in 1899-1902 is most interesting. We are delighted to possess them.

'I take the deepest interest in the country. My thoughts are concentrated on India and Africa. Please let all subscribers to the beautiful presents given me know how much we all value them. I hope whenever you come to this country you will not fail to send me a line. It would be a great pleasure to Lady Roberts and me to have you with us for a visit.

'Believe me,

'Yours sincerely,

'(Signed) ROBERTS.'

The letter is worth putting in if only because it comes from the first soldier of the Empire, and belongs, therefore, of right to the drama of Woolls-Sampson's eventful life. Also, because the fact that Lord Roberts was already taking to heart so much the way things were shaping in India in 1906 is of public interest.

He entered Parliament about this time, first in the Transvaal. One of the saddest sights observable nowadays by philosophic old gentlemen is the ambitious middle-aged man who has made his pile either in the temples of mammon or of 'The Temple' 'standing for Parliament' without one single native aptitude for anything but failure in that arena. Most of the 136 British Legion Branches in London could supply two or three ex-troopers, foot-sloggers, or gunners who, given time and fair play, would make Parliament sit up and take notice now and then. The English, even more I think than the Scots or Irish, though this is not the common opinion, have a truly astonishing aptitude for the political game. Their instinctive understanding of the 'Points of order' trick. Their uncanny quickness in wangling in a word or two edgeways just at the last moment before a vote is taken and thereby snatching a division out of the fire. Their gift of the gab. They are orators—they are eloquent—in their own way—and a very good way too.

The reason I have let myself go on this subject is that so many of my friends give up the bone for the shadow during the last twenty years of their lives by 'standing for Parliament'. Why don't their wives tell them? Please, elderly friends of mine, think well before you stand for Parliament. I speak feelingly because as a bird

escapes from the net of the fowler so several times I have escaped. Actually, at Capetown, as long ago as 1902, after I had made a speech, the points for which were written on my shirt cuff, three serious (and very wealthy), citizens approached me and suggested I should chuck the Army and enter for a political career in South Africa. I am not joking. Well, I have escaped, and I have escaped several similar perils since then. But Woolls-Sampson did not escape.

Think what I may, say what I may, the sad fact remains that Woolls-Sampson did enter Parliament, first in the Transvaal and next in the Union House of Assembly. And it is one consolation to remember that once having so determined no earthly persuasion would have made him believe (let us put it mildly) he was wrong or that Cincinnatus had been a wiser man than he. At once he found himself in a sphere for which, except perhaps in times of crises or revolution, he was absolutely unsuited either by temperament or conviction. He was an uncommonly good speaker but his speech was always direct and uncompromising. He could not beat about the bush. He loathed the manoeuvres of politics almost as much as the crooked by-ways of finance. One single effective speech he did make on the question of Colonial Defence but in other respects he was a fish out of water if ever there was one. When his character and its reactions to political life is analyzed it becomes clear that the root cause of his failure was the usual cause: namely, that he was really too big for his political boots. The combat of parties was a somewhat contemptible occupation in his eyes. He gained no excitement from the moves and counter moves in the parliamentary

game; nor was he built to appreciate the fact that the bastard campaign called 'a war of words' has also its excitements and its adventures. Men he understood, and direct action when necessity called for it, but the tortuous methods, the series of compromises by which the Government of a democracy must aim at holding its own party together whilst disheartening or disuniting the Opposition—all this taking precedence of the vital needs of the country, had for him no attraction. He was not patient enough for these round-about methods. He belonged to the school of those who said to one, 'Come and he cometh, and to another go and he goeth'.

To some of his old friends it was painful, to others almost ludicrous, to see him sitting there, his cane up his arm well concealed from the eyes of the Sergeant-at-Arms, who knew quite well it was there; with a stiff expression on his face, listening to the beating of the air which courtesy called a debate. When a member once called his word in question, he really did wake up. Not only did he wake up but he jumped up and chased his honourable friend down Adderley Street with a horse-whip in his hand, until the astonished legislator complained to Jameson of this demoralizing and quite unparliamentary course of procedure. By thus acting no doubt he did in a way justify his parliamentary existence. We have only to imagine Mr. Winston Churchill chasing Mr. Snowden down Fleet Street—or *vice versa*—to see what a godsend an event of that kind must be to everyone. But the Premier thought so much exertion was bad for Woolls-Sampson's game leg. Doctor Jameson smoothed him down and explained to him that parliamentary work was not carried on in that way. 'More's the pity;

if it was we might get a move on', was the retort. Amidst those latter days of white kid gloves, lady politicians, and milk-and-water manoeuvres, he would certainly have been a refreshing legislator. His policy of not dilly-dallying with evil would have had much to recommend it, were it not for the human truth that harsh compulsion, especially bureaucratic compulsion, breeds a host of opponents, whereas a silent reform among the people themselves, which takes a long time and a very gradual application by the legislature, has shown itself by experience to be the best way of introducing enduring and widespread modifications whether in the behaviour of individuals or the conduct of the affairs of an Empire. These ideas were beyond Woolls-Sampson with his remedy of force; they are also beyond anyone who attempts to create moral evolution by bureaucratic control.

A study of Woolls-Sampson's equipment in this respect should be specially instructive because he belongs to the category of many persons who, like the elder Cato, deplore the tendencies of the age, and would apply antique remedies to a people who are growing out of their teens and have begun to realize their own strength. War, he was right in thinking, temporarily revives the ancient virtues, but luxury, as in Rome, comes to its own again and loses no time in setting to work to corrupt them. Hardly was the Armistice signed after the Great War of 1914-18 when politicians began to debauch the electorate and to incite all classes to extravagance by platform promises about the thousands of millions they were about to exact from the Germans. This rot of civilization seems ever recurrent, and only

the belief that no people will consciously proceed to final suicide, either in morals or finance, lends any hope to the prospect.

* * * * *

So the swift years passed; until upon the chatter of Parliament came the clang of the Great War. To a born soldier like Woolls-Sampson the War was a direct summons, and he at once, in Johannesburg, began to consider ways and means of taking part in it. Immediately the Maritz rebellion broke out and put a stop to all hope of raising a South African corps for service in France in the meantime. So he volunteered for service with the Government forces against the rebels; but his offer was not accepted. His first blow. Not to be thwarted, he sailed for England with the object of soliciting financial assistance from the South African magnates in London towards raising a body of Irregular Horse, but Lord Kitchener vetoed the project and cabled to General Botha the following:

'Woolls-Sampson has asked me what he could do to help the cause of the Empire and how South Africans could do most. I said that in my view every man in the Union ought to go at once for the Germans in South-West Africa and see that matter through thoroughly. After that is completed I will see that those who have fought there—Afrikander and Briton—shall be represented here, if the War is still in progress, and I hope that all will serve the Empire loyally. If you would care to publish this expression of my opinion as being likely in any way to help you—and that is its only object—please do so. On my advice Woolls-Sampson is going back to South Africa at once.'

One would have thought that on this pointed reference to him by the omnipotent Field-Marshal and War Secretary in England, place would have been found for him in the Union Expeditionary Force to German West. But no; he interviewed General Botha in person, when he learned that 'a sufficient force had been organized to deal with the situation in German South-West and all officers appointed'. Bitterly disappointed but still eager as ever to serve in the campaign in some way, any way, he offered to go as General Botha's Orderly; but no—he was told that this was not 'practicable'. His second blow.

The following year (1915) he wrote to Lord Kitchener's Private Secretary the following letter:

'In a short note to you from Plymouth in October last, I expressed the fear that owing to some prejudice or other, my services would not be accepted by the Union Government. Unfortunately that fear was only too well-founded. So far every expedient to serve with the troops now in the Field has failed. In December, as a last resource, I offered to accompany General Botha as his Orderly, but this appeal met with no more sympathy than all other requests since. Lord Kitchener was good enough to say that he would commission me to raise a considerable force after the conquest of the German territory out here. To which was added the proviso that only men who had served with the Expeditionary Force would be enlisted. Obviously I have been unable to comply with this portion of the instructions. Hence, I beg to request you will do me the favour to bring this matter to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief.'¹

¹Another instance of the confusion of thought caused by the fact that a Field-Marshal had been made Secretary of State for War. Had K. been

In a letter to General Botha putting on record his offer to serve in any capacity in the German-West Expedition, Woolls-Sampson says incidentally, 'Had it been possible, I would have enlisted in one of the many corps ere this, but my age, fifty-seven, is beyond the limit'.

Looking over the correspondence, I think he laid too much stress on Lord Kitchener's proviso, as I have no doubt that the War Secretary would have been the first to say that under the circumstances of his failure to obtain service in the German-West campaign it need not apply to him.

Unfortunately, the last portion of his letter to Lord Kitchener's Private Secretary, above quoted, is missing, but it must have contained some proposal for raising a force of South Africans independently of the Union Government, to serve in France at the end of the German-West campaign, for the Private Secretary's reply was as follows: 'I have shown your letter to Lord Kitchener, who desires me to say that he is afraid that it would not be possible for us to take action from the War Office unless the Union Authorities were prepared to make the first step.'

Poor Aubrey, the stars in their courses seemed to be fighting against him. I think it will not be easy for the civilian to enter into that desolated hell—the mind of a keen but ageing soldier, who sees a war in full flame and he left out of it, sitting in safety and comfort at home. To Mr. Bernard Shaw, for instance (unless I entirely

Commander-in-Chief the B.E.F. would have been further back when the shooting began and further forward when the battle of the Marne began—supposing it ever to have been fought.

misinterpret his doctrines), it would be incomprehensible that anyone should be so foolish. Still, there it is: we have Woolls-Sampsons in the world and they have to be reckoned with. When, after the German-West campaign was concluded the South African contingent sailed for France he, who by his long indenture to war and his many services to South Africa, seemed to stand out as the natural selection, even without Lord Kitchener's pointed reference to him, was not to the fore. The prejudice against him seemed to be a real one. His mother put it down to the fact that 'three times, only by the skin of his teeth, did Botha escape from being caught by Aubrey in the Boer War. The Regulars, who were working with him, were behindhand'. But this, I think, was far-fetched. I wrote to General Smuts recently asking him if he could throw any light on the subject. He replied as follows:

'I am much interested to hear that you are busy with the life of your distinguished brother, and I only wish I could give you more definite information on the interesting point you mention. Woolls-Sampson's name must undoubtedly have been mentioned to General Botha, but I don't remember by whom. I do remember that he had some objection to his nomination on the score of impetuosity or some similar quality, which he thought to be a defect. I can still remember his making this objection but my memory is somewhat vague on this point.'

No doubt everyone will recognize here a belated echo of Cypherfontein, which shows how one mistake may stick to a man for ever if the authorities wish it to stick. And very often they have pressing reasons for wishing

to make it stick and for keeping the General unstuck or *dégommé*. The results of a 'General' Election may hang upon whether 'General' So-and-So can be hung upon the rope of public opinion for some fiasco of the war or whether it becomes known that the show-boat was scuppered by some absurd amateurs in the Government. Waiting in Lord K.'s ante-room the day I came back from Gallipoli, FitzGerald, his faithful henchman, and an old friend of my own, asked me the singular question, 'Are you going to fight?' 'I hope so', I replied, 'but where—in France or in East Africa?' 'No, no,' said he, 'I meant *put up a fight* about the Dardanelles. Remember, the Chief is very worried just now'. 'My dear Fitz,' I rejoined, 'set your mind at ease. Mum's the word with me so long as this war lasts; afterwards—' 'Never mind about afterwards', broke in FitzGerald, and then, his ingenuous countenance, clouding over as when a man sees a cobra wriggling across his path, he added, in an awe-stricken whisper, 'There's mischief afoot here, and, I'm sure, General Johnnie, there's no harm telling you, he's anything but safe *himself*!'

Accordingly, since the peace I have spoken freely what was in my mind about some of the muddles in our military house, and whether I have been wise or whether I have been unwise at least I have meant well and my mind has been kept fully occupied. Woolls-Sampson, however, prince of thrusters as he was in the field, had not the temperamental outfit which would have enabled him to keep his end up in peace time. In peace time I can quite see our 'no surrender' warrior letting his reputation go by default as regards the past and not finding in himself much inclination to strike

out a new line in the future. There are several ways of regarding this attitude on the part of a man who, as Kitchener knew jolly well, had given him (to put it mildly) a hand up during the most ticklish six weeks of the whole of his career. He knew well enough how strong his enemies were becoming at home, when Woolls-Sampson, first with Benson and then with Bruce Hamilton, came to his rescue. If from no other source I told him so when I showed him my cable to Lord Roberts. So did Botha know, and really, generous and large-minded as the Boer leader was, it was expecting almost too much from human nature to think that he would give the command of the South African contingent to Woolls-Sampson. Be this as it may, Kitchener had a hundred fine billets of which he could have given him the choice—and he didn't. This was really hard luck. In the opinion of Kitchener's right-hand man, and also of Kitchener, he was not primarily responsible for Cypherfontein. Independent authorities had constantly vouched for his efficiency and sought for his services. Here is Sir Owen Lanyon's report upon him as far back as 1882:

'He served as a volunteer during the Sikukuni and Zulu Wars, and commanded a corps of mounted volunteers during the siege of Pretoria. In these last operations I had the opportunity of personally knowing how he performed his duty and I can state that I could not wish for a more gallant leader, or for one who knew better how to lead his men without needlessly exposing them.'

General Ian Hamilton wrote to him when knighted:¹

'I think if anyone writes to express sympathy with

¹The Judge has fished this dew-drop out of the depths, not I.

your well-merited reward, it should certainly be your latest G.O.C., who has benefited so much by your wise advice and assistance. I am most awfully pleased about it and so will be the whole of the Army.'

But that was not the sort of payment W.-S. cared about. K. ought to have screwed himself together and have paid up.

His last effort was to try and obtain service under General Smuts in East Africa. I can just see Jan Smuts answering.

'Many thanks for your letter offering your services on my Staff. I shall communicate with you later about the matter, as soon as a suitable opportunity occurs. At present I sit, not with my own Staff, but also the inherited Staffs of two predecessors and it will be some time before I can take on new men.'

Woolls-Sampson was a poor wangler—that's the fact. Why did he not cable to Smuts within an hour of his being given Smith-Dorrien's billet? Why had he not rushed down to Cape Town and persuaded the sick Smith-Dorrien to put him on his Staff before he resigned? Then he would have been one of those Staff Officers 'inherited' by Smuts. Anyway, from that point on he kept quiet about the blotting out of all his war service claims, and, as I began by saying, there are several ways of regarding this attitude on the part of any man, though more especially a sailor or a soldier. Benedek, the Austrian Commander in 1866, is the example most often cast into the teeth of any recalcitrant scapegoat by the politicians should he venture to scream or bleat, or whatever goats do when they are at the end of their tether. 'Look at Benedek!' they exclaim. 'He was

a gentleman if you like—he let himself be buried, reputation and all, without once opening his mouth. Wrote no letters. Made no speeches. Did not even leave diaries to be published fifty years after his death. Splendid fellow!!' Yes; and what was the result? The word duke comes from the latin word *dux*, a leader. Arch-duke means a Super-leader. But owing to Benedek's silence the people never found out that their Arch-dukes had become asses and were no longer fit to be entrusted with a Corporal's Guard. Hence very likely the Great War itself, and assuredly the poor showing made during the War by the Austrian Army. So there's something to be said for speech as well as silence.

My belief is, however, that Woolls-Sampson, sitting in the club at Johannesburg, rather lonesome, where he had been wont to be the centre of an animated circle, thought of none of these things. From my Ladysmith recollections I should imagine it remained a mystery to him why all his past service had seemed to go for nought when the world went mad once more. He was the same man, only grown wiser, more valuable as a responsible leader—however had it happened?—where were all his old friends? Well, I feel as if I held the key to that mystery. Enmity makes enemies; a certain number of enemies may help a man along, but in the long run, too many enemies are too much for any man. That's my reading of it anyway. Consider that quarrel between Woolls-Sampson and myself about the pony! Most likely most people will think it was my fault—and I daresay it was my fault. But what about it? Was that any reason for nursing a molehill until it became an impassable mountain? How absurd! I am moved to make this

remark at this point because quite clearly Woolls-Sampson (but for that blasted pony) would have come to me in his dire straits. He must have been within one hundred yards or less of me sitting in the Horse Guards when he went to see Kitchener and FitzGerald at the War Office, and I never knew till now he had been in England. The pony! And I could have fixed him up quite easily. With that huge central striking force of three armies under my absolute command there were a number of billets into which I could have excellently well stowed Woolls-Sampson away until some opening came for getting him into every true fire-eater's idea of ecstasy—under fire. Afterwards, at the Dardanelles, where I used to pray to the Almighty and his Deputy, K., to let me have a contingent, however small, from South Africa, I would have welcomed Woolls-Sampson with open arms—welcomed him to danger, disease, flies, shells, snipers, and all the horrors which, to him, were ambrosia and nectar. With his marvellous constitution, his nerve, and that 'unconquerable optimism' of which Lord Rawlinson spoke, he would have been invaluable and he would have been so happy. I can see him in my mind's eye pursuing Jeremiah with a horse whip. Ah! the pity of it! And what is the moral? Teeth grinding breaks the teeth. 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath.'

So he retired into seclusion at Johannesburg. He cared at all times little for ceremonial. Lord Milner, in 1904, had once to beg him as 'a personal favour' to ride with him and with a few others accompany H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught on to a big parade at Johannesburg. Lord Milner says in his letter:

'H.R.H., who is very anxious to meet you, would be greatly gratified; it is also fitting that the man who more than any other is associated with the corps who won the banners, should take a part in the ceremony of to-day.'

He could not well refuse after this, but I know he had no pleasure in parading.

Before closing the account of his career, it may be interesting to note that in 1910 he was appointed to the leadership of all the Scouts in the Transvaal. In a letter to him Lord Selborne says:

'I was indeed delighted to get your telegram informing me you were prepared to take the leadership of all the Scouts in the Transvaal. As Sir Robert Baden-Powell asked me to nominate such a leader I now have the pleasure of nominating you.'

This was in February 1910. In November 1910 Major Lowther wrote to him from Government House, Cape Town:

'His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught desires me to write and tell you that he is glad to have seen so many of the Boy Scouts on duty on various occasions in Cape Town, and to know that this, among other movements for the useful training of the youth of the country, has been making good progress.'

But all this was before the Great War. He did not stand for Parliament at the next General Election and confined himself to working a gold mine which also failed him. For several years now on he was to be seen daily at the Rand Club, a dignified but pathetic figure, with but a short piece of his famous stick left, reading intently in the fine library, or at the tea hour conversing

with some of his old friends, grouped around him as one whose reputation could still command this little court. It was an ending natural enough and common enough to the lives of great men who have lived beyond their era. If it is true that those whom the gods love die young, how much more certain is it that great men should not outstay their generation, but make their bow from the stage before the old, familiar audience have left their seats and been replaced by a posse of strangers; unless, indeed, by God's special grace they have so much resilience left in their arteries as to enable them to take up and absorb themselves in entirely new interests—but, how many are these? One in a hundred? I doubt it. The badge of the tribe of the other ninety-nine is to believe that they are forgotten, because they are no longer employed; to be unaware from the way the busy world swings away from them, of the regard in which their names, even if they be now no more than names, are held by the people at large. With his sensitive nature Aubrey believed that he had passed clean out of men's memory, not realizing how the glamour of his achievements was still holding good in South Africa. General Rawlinson's letter shows how he was regarded among his military friends, and he had received on his marriage before the Great War, good wishes both from Lord Roberts and from Lord Kitchener.

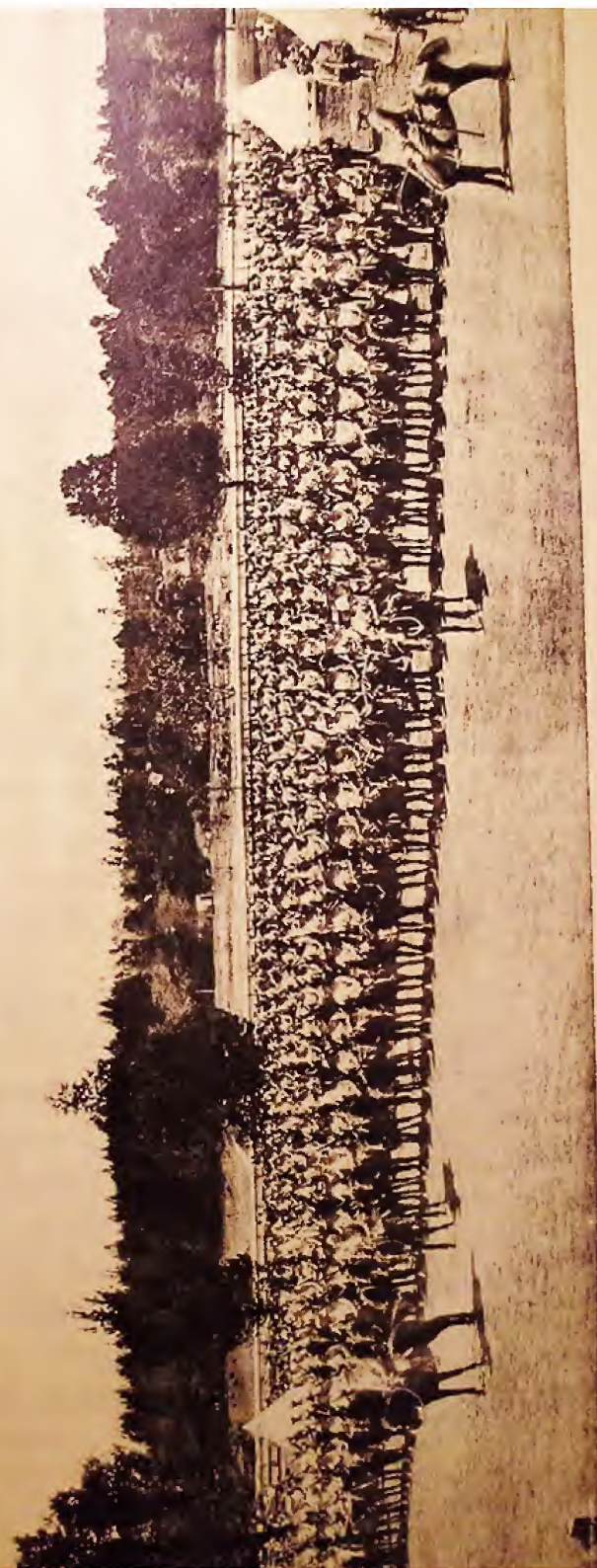
On his death after a short illness in his sixty-eighth year at Johannesburg, General Smuts, then Premier of the Union, sent Colonel Thackeray to represent the Union Government at his funeral; the Imperial Light Horse—still in existence—followed him for the last time, and Johannesburg did him all the honour it could.

ANTI-COMMANDO

For a moment his sun shone out and, by death, the reputation of byegone years was revived: an indomitable, unbending figure of unswerving purpose—that is how he appeared and this was his character. He was one of the few men who are not moulded by circumstance, nor shaped by environment. He came ready-made to them. His line of conduct was inevitable in any given event. His intimates could always prophesy how he would act. Famous as were his achievements, it is his character which renders his life worth study and remembrance. His adventures were but himself revealed.

In private life he was extremely generous, yet even in his generosity he would be arbitrary. Like his grandfather before him, he was in many ways his own enemy; he was too intractable, more downright than his mother, and at times quite in the wrong. But these things are often the weaknesses of a strong character—and as a strong character he will always stand out as one of the striking figures in the heroic period of South African history.

All that remained of his stick, symbol of himself, was buried with him at the Brixton Cemetery, Johannesburg, where, as was very right and fitting, a monument in marble has been erected to his memory by the members of his old regiment, the Imperial Light Horse. Long live the memories of Woolls-Sampson and of those superb fighters the far-famed I.L.H.!



THE FAR-FAMED I. L. H.

APPENDIX I

C.-IN-C. 290.

WAR OFFICE,
LONDON, S.W.

7th July, 1900.

SIR,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th April last, recommending that the Victoria Cross should be conferred upon four Officers, four non-commissioned Officers, and one Trooper, named in the margin for conspicuous bravery displayed by them on 21st October (at Elands-laagte), 30th October, and 4th November, 1899, respectively.

In reply I am to acquaint you that the Commander-in-Chief will submit to the Queen that the decoration in question be granted to Captain Meiklejohn, 2nd Lieutenant Norwood, and Sergt.-Major Robertson, and that the medal for distinguished conduct in the Field be awarded to Sergt.-Drummer Lawrence, Corporal-Piper McLeod, Lance-Corpl. Dryden, and Trooper Evans, whose conduct, though gallant, was not, in his opinion, of such a nature as to merit the high distinction of the Victoria Cross. With regard to Colonel (local

Colonel (local Maj.-Gen.) I. S. M. Hamilton, C.B., D.S.O.

Lieut.-Col. A. Woolls-Sampson, Imp. Light Horse.

Capt. M. F. M. Meiklejohn, 2nd Bn. Gordon Highlanders.

2nd Lieut. J. Norwood, 5th Dragoon Gds.

Sergt.-Major W. Robertson.

Sergt.-Drummer G. Lawrence.

Corpl. K. McLeod.

Lce.-Corpl. S. Dryden, 2nd Bn. Gord. Highrs.

Trooper A. W. Evans, Natal Mounted Police.

Major-General) Ian Hamilton, I am to observe that the act for which he was recommended was performed when he was commanding a Brigade, *i.e.* in the position of a General Officer. The Victoria Cross has never been conferred upon an Officer so high in rank. The Commander-in-Chief thinks this limitation a wise one, and that it would not be desirable to establish a precedent opposed to it. He is unable, therefore, to submit Major-General Hamilton's name to the Queen.

I am to add that while Colonel Woolls-Sampson evidently led his men with much gallantry, Lord Wolseley does not feel that his conduct was sufficiently exceptional to call for the bestowal of the great favour of the Victoria Cross.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sd.) COLERIDGE GROVE, M.S.

APPENDIX II

THE DEATH OF BENSON

THE following extract is taken by kind permission from the description given in *The Times History of the War in South Africa* of the action of Bakenlaagte and of the glorious end of Colonel Benson, who was to many of us, and very specially to Woolls-Sampson, the ideal of what a soldier ought to be. His presence spread the contagion of courage; his loss was irreparable. And there is another tragedy of blacker dye underlying this brilliantly told story of the destruction of Benson and his rear-guard. The account was edited and, in all probability, written by the hand of Erskine Childers—a man of many sound military ideas as well as of literary talent. He was predestined to be shot himself not in defence but in defiance of the Empire after the Irish troubles of 1921.

'The Fight at Gun Hill. A murderous conflict at close quarters now began. Benson's scanty line, some 180 men in all, was overlapped at either end. From both flanks, but especially from the front, where only thirty yards of ant-heap-dotted grass separated the nearest combatants, a rain of fire was poured in. The guns, posted about twenty yards apart, fired three rounds of case and then were silent, every man of the detachment serving them being killed or wounded. The battery

commander, Colonel Guinness, who had accompanied Benson to Ridge A, had returned with him to the hill and was now close to the guns, fired the last round himself and then called for the limbers and teams, which were standing on the reverse side of the ridge. As soon as they topped the skyline, drivers, teams and the sergeant-major who led them, dropped in their tracks like corn under the scythe. Guinness and Maclean were shot soon afterwards. Still, there stood the guns, as they had stood at Vlakfontein, dumb emblems of honour, more eloquent in silence than in speech.

'Of the Scottish Horse, the gallant Murray, plying his pistol from behind an ant-heap, was one of the first to fall; Captains Lindsay and Inglis and Lieutenant Woodman, all of the same regiment, and Captain Thorold and Lieutenants Brooke and Shepherd of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, were killed soon afterwards. Benson himself, badly wounded in the knee, had refused to be carried away and was now crawling from point to point in the firing-line, encouraging all around him with a splendid example of coolness and courage. Other examples were not lacking. Benson's Assistant Staff Officer, young Eyre Lloyd of the Coldstream Guards, had been occupied in laying out the camp, but, divining the predicament of the rear-guard, had determined to join his Colonel. Technically, it was a departure from duty, but one that it is hard to censure. At a moment when it was death to appear on the skyline, he galloped up to the rear of the guns, dismounted and threw his reins to a trooper. Trooper and horse fell dead as he did so. Scarcely appearing to notice what had happened, he sauntered quietly towards Benson, upright, unarmed,

the target of a score of Boer rifles, and fell, mortally wounded, within a few paces of his chief. Lloyd was not the only man to court death on the fatal hill. Quarter-master-sergeant Warnock, of the Scottish Horse, whose place was with the convoy, left it to join his comrades in the place of peril. Aware that their ammunition was very low, he took charge of two ammunition carts which were standing at the foot of the hill, and, together with Corporal McCarthy and Private Cunningham, crawled up with some boxes of cartridges. Cunningham was killed; the other two threw the ammunition right and left to all who could reach it. Warnock then took a dead man's rifle, and with reckless audacity crawled from ant-heap to ant-heap, methodically picking off Boer after Boer, until he emerged outside the British firing-line. There he was wounded in three places. None who saw it will forget the behaviour of this gallant old soldier;¹ but the eye-witnesses were growing terribly few. All down the line, Yorkshiremen, Scotsmen, Rifles and gunners had been mown down in scores under the fierce converging fire. One determined and united rush must have carried the position; but the steady fire and unfaltering demeanour of the little band of heroes availed to defer that rush. Man by man they had to be exterminated before the guns could be carried.

'*The Hill is not Reinforced.* No reinforcements reached the hill. Of the troops not already engaged the nearest were two weak companies of infantry under Major Eales, which at the moment of Botha's charge were between Gun Hill and the farm, heading towards the

¹Warnock had previously served for 21 years in the Scottish Borderers.

latter with orders to go into camp. When the rear-guard reached Gun Hill, one of Benson's staff rode over and ordered these companies to reinforce the hill. They turned back, lost thirty-three men from the deadly fire which swept over the crest, but were unable to effect the issue. Eales, a very gallant officer, rode forward to the crest in person and was killed. In the rest of the field, during the twenty or twenty-five minutes which constituted the crisis of the action, few persons seemed to have realized that a mortal struggle was raging on Gun Hill. All day there had been an incessant fusillade from the rear-guard, and Botha, while massing in force to the south, had taken care to demonstrate at every point round the camp. The greater part of the mounted troops, scattered about in small detachments, with no central reserve, were either engaged in the defence of important points, or vigorously threatened. To the east of Gun Hill, the North Lancashire Company was isolated and fully occupied with the defence of Ridge B; to the north-west of Gun Hill, Crum's small detachment, aided by a few infantry, bravely maintained an unequal conflict with a greatly superior force.

'The Boers capture the Hill. After about fifteen minutes' fighting, the Boers attacking the hill rose to their feet, as though about to rush the position. There were still three or four dozen effective rifles on the ridge; a ragged volley crackled out, and the Boers sank to earth again. There they remained from five to ten minutes endeavouring to pick off the last survivors. It was during this period that Benson, who had again been hit—a flesh-wound in the arm—called for a volunteer to take a message to the camp forbidding ambulances to be sent

out to the hill, on the ground that the Boers would use the mules for the purpose of removing the guns. Trooper Grierson of the Scottish Horse rose to take the message and was immediately hit in the foot. The same bullet struck Benson and inflicted a mortal wound. Some Boers, led by a man with a grey pony, now walked up towards the guns, as though to take possession. A few unwounded men among the escort delivered a last volley: the man with the grey pony dropped and the others recoiled. The respite was only momentary. In another minute the whole Boer line, four or five deep, rose up like one man and stood firing indiscriminately at everything that moved on the ridge. Then with cries of triumph it surged forward and the hill was lost. The captured guns were swung round and a few shells were fired at the camp. But the Boers, who had lost nearly a hundred of their best and bravest men in overcoming the defence, were in no mood to press their advantage resolutely. Those of the stormers who advanced down the reverse slope were checked by the fire of the infantry.

'The Boers abandon the Hill, but remove the Guns. So ended a fight unique in the annals of the war. The defenders of the hill had been almost annihilated. All the officers present were killed or wounded. Of 79 Scottish Horse only 6 were unhurt, of 32 gunners only 3, of 20 60th Rifles only 3 and of 40 Yorkshiremen only 5. Some of the survivors escaped to the camp after the final rush; a few lay out on the ridge, overlooked in the general confusion, and witnessed the last and saddest scene in the drama of Bakenlaagte, when to the victorious horde of Boers, stripping and plundering, there suc-

ANTI-COMMANDO

ceeded a rain of shrapnel from the British guns in camp. The shell fire was effectual. The hill, strewn with the wreckage of the defending force, was for the time abandoned by the Boers, and no effort to retake it was made from the British side. At nightfall, ambulances went out to the succour of the wounded and under their cover the Boers removed the guns with oxen. At nightfall, too, Crum's gallant detachment, now completely isolated, was withdrawn to camp.

'The Camp Intrenched. Benson, situated as he had been at the point of utmost peril, had not been able to control the general situation. After the loss of Gun Hill and the news of Benson's mortal wound, some doubt arose as to who should take the command—Colonel Woolls-Sampson or Major Dauglish of the Buffs, the latter being the senior imperial officer. The point, by mutual consent, was settled in favour of Sampson. Both officers took the view that the safety of the main body and the convoy was already sufficiently compromised, and that an effort to recover the guns was not justifiable. The column, certainly, was severely shaken. With the minor losses of the day reckoned, it had lost a quarter of its strength—238 men killed and wounded and about 120 captured. The huge convoy was not only an impediment to free action, but a source of serious anxiety. Sampson, therefore, took prompt steps to secure and intrench an inner line of defence. So effectually was this done that Botha, who had issued orders for the camp to be stormed in the night, abandoned his design and contented himself with the results already achieved. He had, indeed, gained only the bare measure of success which his masterly tactics deserved. Had the defenders of Gun

THE DEATH OF BENSON

Hill faltered appreciably, the momentum already gained might well have carried the Boers straight into the camp, with far more disastrous consequences to the British. The heroic stand of the rear-guard places Bakenlaagte among the glorious memories of British arms.

'Death of Benson. Benson, rapidly sinking under his wounds, was brought into camp at 9 p.m. His first thought was for the safety of the column. Refusing medical help until the doctors should be less busy, he sent at once for Sampson, confirmed him in the command and gave particular directions for the defence of the camp. Sampson was able to assure him that the force was already prepared for any emergency. Benson died at 6 o'clock on the following morning. Struck down in the full tide of a fine career, the young colonel of artillery had nevertheless done sound and lasting work. When the whole tendency of British military policy was to sacrifice enterprise to organization, he showed an example of fearless initiative. He sought risks with ardour and obstinacy which were at once his best safeguard and his final justification. This is no paradox; for if his spirit had been the dominant spirit, the risks he and others took would have been infinitely less. How was it that Botha was able to make his dramatic appearance on the field of Bakenlaagte and to drive home that magnificent charge? The reason is written plain in the events of the two preceding months. He and his men should have returned, if they returned at all, from that long expedition to Zululand shattered and cowed. Instead, thanks to the hesitation of their enemies, they returned with the moral and discipline which carried them to Gun Hill.'

INDEX

A

- Afghan War (1878-81), 71-72
- Afrikaans language, 20
- Alcohol, 82
- Ali Khel, Ian Hamilton's experience at, 71
- Amajuba, and its effects, 26, 71, 101
- Arthur, Sir George, *Life of Lord Kitchener*, 147
- Aylward, a noted Fenian, 63

B

- Babington, General, 140
- Bagot, Walter, 125
- Bakenlaagte, battle of, 145 ff.; Kitchener's cable concerning, 147-8; disaster to and death of Benson, 145, 203, 209; command taken over by Woolls-Sampson, 145, 208; fight at Gun Hill, 203; capture of Gun Hill, 206-9
- Barberton, 64, 86
- Barlow, Sir Morison, service on Swaziland Border, 72-3, 76
- Basutos, praise of, 14; campaign shared in by Woolls-Sampson, 30; outbreak of war, 73
- Bee-hunting, 55

- Benedik, General, cited as a type, 196-7
- Bennett, Arnold, *quoted*, 29
- Benson, Colonel, at Carolina, 143; at Umpilusi River, 144; his end, 145; as the ideal soldier, 152, 156, 203; at Bakenlaagte, 203 ff.
- Biggarsberg Pass, significance of, 110, 158
- Bird-watching, 53; life saved by a blue crane, 61
- Block-house system, 143
- Bloemfontein to Pretoria, march from, 147
- Bloem, Walter, *The Advance from Mons*, 113
- Blood, General Sir Bindon, letter to Ian Hamilton concerning Woolls-Sampson, 141-2
- Blood River Poort, Botha defeats Gough, 143
- Blueberg, described, 76
- Blue crane, incident concerning, 61-2
- Boers, depicted by Reitz, 29
- Boer War (1880-81), approach of, 71, 77
- Bond, formation of the, 101
- Botha, General, at the Vereeniging Conference, 19, 20; and bilingual system, 21; advance

INDEX

on Natal, 143; and Woolls-Sampson in Great War, 190, 191, 194; part played by, at Gun Hill, 206
 Botha, Hans, duel with Woolls-Sampson, 79-80; in favour of release of Woolls-Sampson and Davies from prison, 100
 Bovenplatz, Woolls-Sampson's letter from, 65
 Brak Spruit, 177, 178
 Brereton, Rev. Mr., and deputation to Kruger for release of Woolls-Sampson, 97
 Brierly, Colonel G. T., diary quoted, on Cypherfontein, 138; march to Deeikiul, 169
 Briggs, Major, fine service at Cypherfontein, 139, 140; in action near Great Harts River, 176
 Brodrick, St. John, 28
 Brooke, Captain Victor, aide-de-camp to Ian Hamilton, 169, 172, 180
 Brooke, Lieutenant, at Gun Hill, 204
 Buffelsvlei, 173
 Buller, General Sir Redvers, in Zulu War, 70
 Burnham, Major, *Scouting on Two Continents*, 25, 27; letter to Woolls-Sampson, 92
 Butler, Sir William, General in Command at the Cape, 103

C

Caesar's Camp, Ladysmith, 125
 Canadian Mounted Rifles, the, 164-5
 Cape Colony, climate at, 50

Cape Colony, first Governor of, appointed, 62
 Cape of Good Hope, significance of, 14, 16
 Carrington, General, commander against Secocoeni, 66
 Celliers, Commando leader, 174
 Chamberlain, Joseph, attitude to Boer War, 28, 104; and Jameson Raid, 98
 Chelmsford, Lord, in chief command in Zulu War, 70
 Childers, Erskine, as military authority, 203
 Churchill, Winston, and Vane Tempest, 105; depicts Omdurman, 179
 Climate, at Cape Colony, 50
 Colley, Colonel Sir George Pomeroy, 71
 Colvin, Ian, *Life of Dr. Jameson*, 120
 Concentration Camps, in South African War, 26
 Connaught, Duke of, visits Johannesburg, 197, 198
 Cookson, Colonel, and R.H.A. Mounted Rifles, 164; hesitation of, 167, 177
 Cooper, Fenimore, influence of, on Woolls-Sampson, 53
 Cronje, General, at Paardeburg, Cookson's situation compared with, 177
 Crum, at Gun Hill, 206
 Cunningham, Private, service at Gun Hill, 205
 Cypherfontein, action at, 137 ff.; Brierly's diary quoted, 138; Woolls-Sampson's part in, 137, 139, 143, 194

INDEX

D

Dardanelles Campaign, comments on, 160, 163, 169, 193
 Daughlish, Major, considered as Benson's successor, 208
 Davies, Karri, 81; and Woolls-Sampson, letter to British Agent at Pretoria, 96; imprisoned, 99, 100; fights with I.L.H., 122, 132
 Delagoa Bay, at disposal of British troops, 105
 De la Rey, General, at Vereeniging Conference, 19, 20, 21, 22; and Kitchener, 24; defeats Methuen at Tweebosch, 160; 'grand slam,' 163-4
 Dennison, Commandant, with Woolls-Sampson, visits Secocoeni, 66-8
 Devil's Peak, 50, 56, 57
 Devonshire Regiments, service at Elandslaagte, 112 ff.
 Diamond Fields, life and incidents at the, 58-61
 Diamond Hill, battle of, 132
 Donop, von, 160
 Driekiul, action near, 173, 178
 Dryden, Lance-Corporal Sergeant, service of, 201
 Dutch and British, relations before 1880, 101

E

Eales, Major, service and death at Gun Hill, 205-6
 East African States, Union of, under consideration, 13, 14
 Edward VII, and peace, 171
 Egyptians, 14

Elandslaagte, incident at, 66; account of the battle, 107 ff.; men recommended for honours after, 201-2
 Evans, Trooper A. W., service at Elandslaagte, 201

F

Ferreria's Horse, 65
 FitzGerald, Colonel, 193
 Fitzpatrick, Sir Percy, *The Transvaal from Within*, 92, 93
 Fort Donald, 85
 Franchise, rights of, 14, 15; in Transvaal, 93, 102
 French, General Sir John, at Elandslaagte, 113, 157; the weakness of his Intelligence in Cape Colony, 154; flight to Ladysmith, 157; Klip Drift, 158; his opinion of Grierson and Haig, 159

G

Galbraith, A.A.G. Afghan War, 71, 72
 Gealeka campaign, 50
 Generals, on the choice of, 192, 193
 Gilfillan, Captain, sent to Estcourt, 107; visits Woolls-Sampson after relief of Ladysmith, 131
 Girouard, Sir Percy, 167
 Gladstone, W. E., and Boer War, 82
 Glossop, Captain, service at Cypherfontein, 140
 Gold, ornaments of, found at Zimbabwi, 90

INDEX

Gordon Highlanders, in action at Elands-laagte, 113
 Gosse, Edmund, reference to his opinions, 19
 Gough, General Sir Hubert, meets Botha at Blood River Poort, 143; his praise of Woolls-Sampson, 160
 Grenfell, Column Commander, 175
 Grey, Bishop, 38
 Grierson, Trooper, service at Gun Hill, 207
 Griqualand West, becomes a Crown Colony, 62
 Groot Harts River, action near, 174, 175
Grosvenor, the, search for, 56
 Grove, Coleridge, letter from, concerning proposed award of the V.C. to certain officers and men after battle of Elands-laagte, 201-2
 Guinness, Colonel, his service at Gun Hill, 204
 Gun Hill, action at, 203; loss of, 208
 Gundamak, treaty of, 71

H

Haig, General Sir Douglas, his advisory qualities praised by French, 154; criticized by Woolls-Sampson, 156, 158
 Hamilton, General Bruce, his Force, 147; letter from, on Woolls-Sampson, 148-51
 Hamilton, General Sir Ian, his 'capture of Heilbron,' 108; story of his field-glasses, 127-8; his return to South Africa, 145, 146-7; cable from Roberts, wire

from Kitchener, 153; to him Woolls-Sampson criticizes certain soldiers, 156-7; takes command in the West, 168; his letter to Roberts on course of South African War, 170; congratulates Woolls-Sampson on his knighthood, 194; mentioned in Grove's letter, 201-2
 Hamilton, Hubert, Kitchener's military secretary, 166
 Heilbron, capture of, 108
 Henderson, David, Chief Intelligence Officer at G.H.Q., 167
 Heredity, comments on, 40
 Hertzog, General (now Premier), 17
 'Higher Direction' in War, the, 145
 Hyenas, 88, 89

I

Imperial Light Horse, raised by Woolls-Sampson, 103; taken to Natal, 106, 107; in action at Elands-laagte, 112-3; casualties, 115-6 join Mahon's column for relief of Mafeking, 132; enter Pretoria, 132; reconstituted, 133; and end of Boer War, 136 ff.; at Woolls-Sampson's funeral, 199
 Imperial Yeomanry, the, 175
 Inglis, Captain, service at Gun Hill, 204

J

Jameson, Dr., invades Transvaal, 96; effects of the raid, 102; Colvin's *Life of Jameson*, 120; in Ladysmith, 122

Janssens, Governor, and legendary hoards, 56
 Jay, a young sentry, demands countersign from Woolls-Sampson, 94
 Johannesburg, 90; in the Boer War, 108, 109
 Johnstone, R., V.C. service at Elands-laagte, 115
 Joubert, General, dead Boers handed over to, after Wagon Hill, 33

K

Kalk Bay, visits to, 41, 45, 47, 52, 84
 Keir, Colonel, at Rooiwal, 177
 Keith, Sir Arthur, *quoted*, 17
 Kekewich, General, 163; at Os-hoek, 174, 175; praised in Hamilton's letter to Roberts, 177; and in official Dispatch announcing victory, 180
 Kenya, in proposed Union of British East Africa, 13, 14
 Kerksdorp, entry into, 178
 Kimberley, unrivalled as diamond mines, 90
 Kimberley, district described, 61
 Kitchener, General Sir H. H. (Lord Kitchener of Khartoum), at the Vereeniging Conference, 24; influenced by Eastern experiences, 25, 26; attitude to the Boers, 27; orders concerning loot, 127; and action at Cypherfontein, 137 ff.; sends troops to Natal, 144; on Woolls-Sampson, after Bakenlaagte, 145; welcomes Ian Hamilton,

INDEX

in South Africa, 153; hates waste, 161; final struggle against de la Rey, 162; character of, 163, 165-6; attitude to Woolls-Sampson during the Great War, 189
 Kitchener, Colonel Walter, in action near Barber's Pan, 164; comment on his generalship, 167; against de la Rey, 165; mentioned in Ian Hamilton's letter to Roberts, 174, 176, 177

Klerksdorp, 173
 Klip Drift, French's charge at, 158
 Knipe, Colonel, 37
 Knipe, Miss, of St. Helena, 37
 Koch, General, Boer commander at Elands-laagte, 110-1; mortally wounded, 116; rumours concerning British treatment of, 118
 Kokstad, 85
 Kommetje, 45
 Koomati Poort, in peace and in war, 88, 105
 Kruger, Paul (Oom Paul), 23; feeling against the rule of, 92, 93; and loyalty of back-veld Dutch, 95; misunderstands Woolls-Sampson, 99; his attitude towards Woolls-Sampson and Davies, 100; character of, 102; and outbreak of Boer War, 104

L

Ladysmith, siege of, 33, 34, 35, 120; described by Colvin, 121; relief of, 131
 Language, confusion caused by, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21

INDEX

Lanyon, Sir Owen, expresses high opinion of Woolls-Sampson, 73, 87, 194
 Lawrence, G., Sergeant-Drummer, service at Elandslaagte, 201
 Lee, Miss Jennie, 105
 Leonard, C., 95
 Liesbeck river, 52
 Lindsay, Captain, in action at Elandslaagte, 204
 Lloyd, Eyre, serves at Gun Hill, 204
 Long, Rev. W., 38
 Loot, matters concerning, 127-31
 Lowe, Colonel, serving under W. Kitchener's command, 164
 Lowther, Major, letter to Woolls-Sampson, 198
 Lydenberg, 88
 Lyttelton, General, the Hon. Sir Neville, fails to round up Botha, 144

M

McCarthy, Corporal, serves at Gun Hill, 205
 Machadodorp Station, 141
 McKenzie, Colonel, highly praised by Woolls-Sampson, 183
 Maclean, in action at Gun Hill, 204
 McLeod, Corporal K., serves at Elandslaagte, 201
 Madagascar, gold venture in, 182
 Mafeking, relief of, 132
 Majuba, bullets used at, 80
 Makouwspan, 177
 Manchester Regiments, at Elandslaagte, 113

Maritzburg, 107
 Maritz rebellion, 189
 Marker, Captain, of the Guards, 167
 Marling, Sir Percy, 128
 Matabele War, outbreak of, 87; peace (1894), 89
 Maxwell, Captain, and A.D.C. Bengal Cavalry, 167
 Meiklejohn, Captain, V.C. for Elandslaagte, 201
 Methuen, Lord, defeated at Tweebosch, 160
 Middlebult, 173, 178
 Milner, Sir Alfred (Lord Milner), 23; at treaty of Vereeniging, 24; and concentration camps, 26; at the end of Boer War, 28; attitude towards Boers, 104; affected by action at Cypherfontein, 137; arranges meeting of Woolls-Sampson with the Duke of Connaught, 197
 'Moss Gough,' 49
 Mullins, Captain C., serves at Elandslaagte, 115

N

Natal, invasion of, proposed, 143; operations criticized, 152; disturbances in 1906, 180, 183
 Newcastle to Amajuba, march from (1881), 51
 Nkandla forest, 183
 Noodhulp, 173, 193
 Norman, in action at Cypherfontein, 140
 Norwood, Lieutenant J., serves at Elandslaagte, 201
 Nourse, Captain, 78

INDEX

O

'Old Nick,' suggestions made by, 161, 162
 Oliphant's Nek, 21
 Ormond, Lieutenant, serves at Cypherfontein, 140

P

Peace and peace-making, 26
 Pondo Border, 73
 Pondoland, 85
 Potchefstroom, entered by Woolls-Sampson, 132
 Potgieter, bravery of, 179-80
 Press propaganda, comments on, 23, 118, 146, 170
 Pretoria, invested, 81; old gaol at, 99; during the Boer War, 108, 109

R

Rand, the, 90
 Rawlinson, General (Lord Rawlinson), 32; letter to Woolls-Sampson, 33, 125, 199; and siege of Ladysmith, 33; sends for Ian Hamilton, 168; mentioned in Hamilton's letter to Roberts, 176
 Reformers, and Reform Movement in Transvaal, 92, 93, 102
 Reitfontein, 138
 Reitz, Colonel Denys, 15; how treated in Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Colony, 25; his fairness, 28; banished to Madagascar, 30; service 1899-1902; *Commando* quoted, 103; on Boer War guilt, 106

Rhodes, Cecil, 23; as manufacturer, 59; to Oxford, 60; and Reformers in Transvaal, 93; and Woolls-Sampson, 181
 Rhodes, Frankie, 124, 132
 Rhodesia, ancient fort in, 57; war in, 87; gold found in, 90, 91
 Roberts, General F. (Earl Roberts), on matter of farm-burning, 24, 25; experiences in the East, 25; and concentration camps, 26; at Diamond Hill, 132; and Smith-Dorrien, 147; cables Ian Hamilton message from British Cabinet, 153; Hamilton's letter to, 172-8; accepts gift from I.L.H., 184
 Robertson, General Sir William, 147
 Robertson, Sergeant-Major W., gets V.C. for Elandslaagte, 201
 Robinson, Sir Hercules, High Commissioner of Pretoria, 96
 Roodewal, battle of, 170, 171, 179
 Roosevelt, Theodore, considered as a type, 15
 Rosebank village, 43
 Rustenburg, 179

S

Salisbury, Lord, against the Boer War, 104
 Sampson, Aubrey, *see* Woolls-Sampson, Sir Aubrey
 Sampson, Mrs. (mother of Aubrey Woolls-Sampson), 84
 Sampson, Grandmother, 44, 45
 Sampson, (father of Aubrey Woolls-Sampson), 38
 Sampson, Colonel Charles, 36-7

INDEX

- Sampson, Ivo (brother of Aubrey Woolls-Sampson), serves in Basuto War, 76
- Sampson, Victor (brother of Aubrey Woolls-Sampson), on events at Cypherfontein, 140 ff.
- Sampson, Captain William Patrick, 37-8
- Sam the Zulu, 53-55
- Sauer, Dr., 90
- Schernbrucker, Colonel, 131
- Sclater, Colonel R.A., 178
- Scott-Chisholme, Colonel, at Elandslaagte, 113
- Scouts, 198
- Secocoeni, war against, 65, 66; capture of, 70
- Senegalese soldiers praised, 14
- Shangani River, 87
- Sharks, 85
- Shaw, Mr. Bernard, 191
- Shaw, Lieutenant-General Sir F., appreciation of Woolls-Sampson, 151
- Shaw, Mr. Tom, 159
- Shepherd, Lieutenant, serves at Gun Hill, 204
- Shepstone, Sir Theophilus, 73, 75, 95, 101
- Silver Mines, near Kalk Bay, 56
- Smith-Dorrien, General, highly praised, 147; illness of, 195
- Smuts, General, 17; at Vereeniging Conference, 19, 20, 21; letter to Judge Victor Sampson, 192; and Woolls-Sampson in the Great War, 195
- South African Constabulary, 175
- Southey, Sir Richard, Colonial Secretary at Cape Town, 62
- Soveral, Marquis de, 104; and Joseph Chamberlain, 105
- Spellman, little Hottentot boy, 88, 89
- Spion Kop, 177
- Sprigg, Sir Gordon, 84
- Staff Establishments, comments on, 172
- Stephenson, General, 183
- Struben, Mr., 80
- Suez Canal, 39
- Superstition, cases of, 88, 89, 91
- Swaziland Border, 72
- Symons, General Penn, 94

T

- Tanganyika, in proposed Union of British East Africa, 14
- Thackeray, Colonel, attends funeral of Woolls-Sampson, 199
- Thorold, Captain, at Gun Hill, 204
- Times History of the War in South Africa, The*, 145, 203 ff.
- Torture applied to prisoners, by natives of South Africa, 67, 69
- Transvaal, Scouts in, 198
- Treasure-hunting, 56
- Tucker, General, 114

U

- Uganda, as part of the proposed Union of British East Africa, 14
- Ulundi, victory at, 71
- Umquikela, Pondo Chief, 86
- Umsoet, an irreconcilable chief, 67
- Union of South Africa, 15

INDEX

V

- Vaalbank, 173
- Vegetation in South Africa, 52
- Vereeniging, Treaty of, 23, 171
- Versailles, Treaty of, 28
- Vleesch Kraal, 174, 177

W

- Warnock, Quarter-Master, at Gun Hill, 205
- Waterberg district, 76
- Western Transvaal, 135
- Wet, Christian de, 20, 21
- Wet, Sir Jacobus de, 97
- Willoughby, 122
- Wilson, Alan, massacred, 87, 88, 89
- White, General Sir George, at Ladysmith, 33
- Wolmaranstad, 176
- Wolseley, Sir Garnet (Lord Wolseley), in Secocoeni War, 66, 71; his decision as to awards of the V.C., 202
- Woolls, Captain, 39
- Woolls, Mrs. (mother of Margaret Woolls), 40
- Woolls, Margaret, 38
- Wools, Rev. T. A., 40
- Woolls-Sampson, Sir Aubrey, 15, 30, 31; letter from Rawlinson, 33, 34; descent, 36-7; appearance, 38, 48, 64; runs away from home, 39; early days, 41 ff.; character, 35-6, 75, 154, 196-7, 200; a swimmer, 46-7; a 'lady-killer,' 49; influenced by Fenimore Cooper, 53; bee-hunting, 55; in Zulu War, 55; treasure-

hunting, 56; at school, 57, 58; to Diamond Fields, 58; lost in the Karroo, 61; learns Kaffir, 63; studies the Transvaal, 64; his magic stick, 64, 91-2, 120, 198, 200; joins Ferreria's Horse, 65; under fire for first time, 65; serves under Wolseley, 66; with Dennison to Secocoeni's kraal, 66 ff.; at Amajuba, 71; to Basuto War, 73; made assistant to Sir M. Barlow, 72; made Native Commissioner for Waterberg district, 73; writes on Boers' hostility in 1880, 73-5; goes to Pretoria, 78; duel with Hans Botha, 79-80; in prison, 81; rumour of his death, 81; health, 82, 133; and surrender of Pretoria, 83; at Fort Donald, 85; returns to Barberton, 86; fights in Matabele War, 87; visits Zimbabwi, 90; and the Reformers, 93, 94; and the Jameson raid, 96, 97; Reformers' fines, 98; imprisoned, 99-100; visits his mother, 101; raises the I.L.H., 103; goes to Natal, 106; at Elandslaagte, 109 ff.; commanding the I.L.H., 114; wounded, 114; in Ladysmith hospital, 119 ff.; friendship with Ian Hamilton, 126-131; enters Potchefstroom, 132; letter to his mother, 133; made Colonel of the I.L.H., 134, 137; serves at Cypherfontein, 138 ff.; and 'honours,' 142; acts as Intelligence Officer, 145 ff., 154; and Colonel Benson, 144, 145, 208; visits Hubert Hamilton at Pre-

INDEX

toria, 155; opinion on soldiers, 156; on the Elandslaagte campaign, 157; in Eastern Transvaal, 159; joins Kekewich, 161; on bad generalship, 167; at Roodewal, 171; end of military career, 180; and matters of finance, 181, 182; work in Natal disturbances, 180, 183; opinion of Colonel McKenzie, 183-4; career in Parliament, 185-9; and the Great War, 189 ff.; knighted, 194; wishes to join Smuts in East Africa, 195; last

days and death, 196 ff.; funeral, 199
'Woolsack,' The, 42-3, 44, 56

Y

Yockney, Captain, I.L.H., 139, 140

Z

Zambesi, 91
Zarps, the, 112
Zimbabwi, the ruins of, 90
Zulus, comments on, 14
Zulu War, 70



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RISING COLUMN COMMANDERS, 1901

Left : General Sir Bruce Hamilton

Right : General Lord Rawlinson of Trent



THE WOOLSACK



547 12161

THE WILY OLD COUNSELLOR



THE BURIAL OF THE OLD 92ND

Next morning it was found that an unknown hand had written
on the tomb-stone 'Ninety-twa no deid yet'



BRUCE HAMILTON AND HIS STAFF ON TREK IN 1900

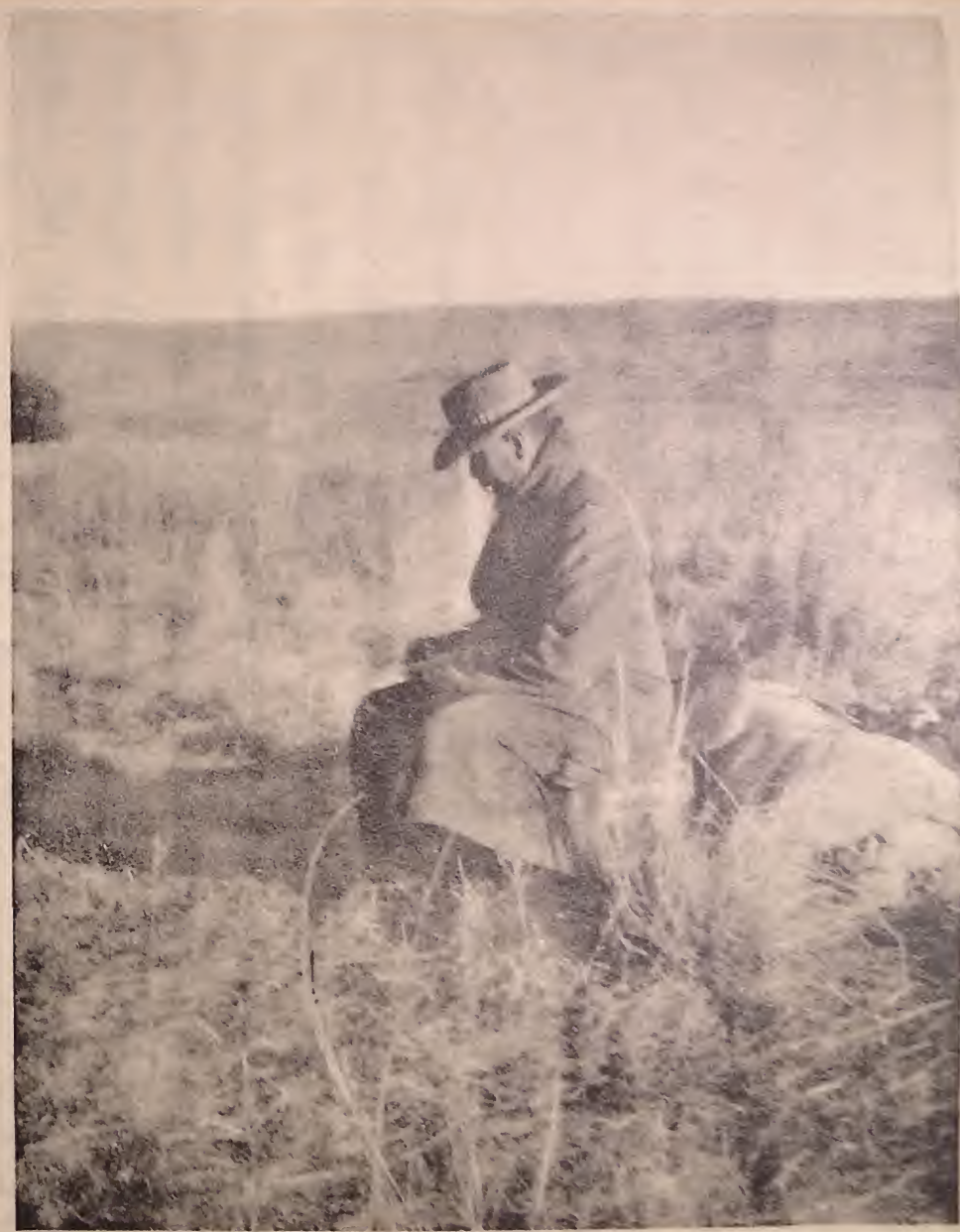


WINSTON CHURCHILL AND THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH
AWAITING A REPLY FROM BRUCE HAMILTON [*with
telescope*] TO A MESSAGE FROM IAN HAMILTON. THE

BATTLE OF DIAMOND HILL IS IN FULL SWING



BOER SURRENDERS NEAR ERMELO



COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA
WRITING OUT ORDERS



VRYHEID, 1901

Left : Woolls-Sampson holding his magic stick

Next to him, seated : Bruce Hamilton



COMMANDANT GENERAL BOTHA CONSULTING WITH
THE COMMANDANT OF THE WAKERSTROOM COMMANDO, 1902



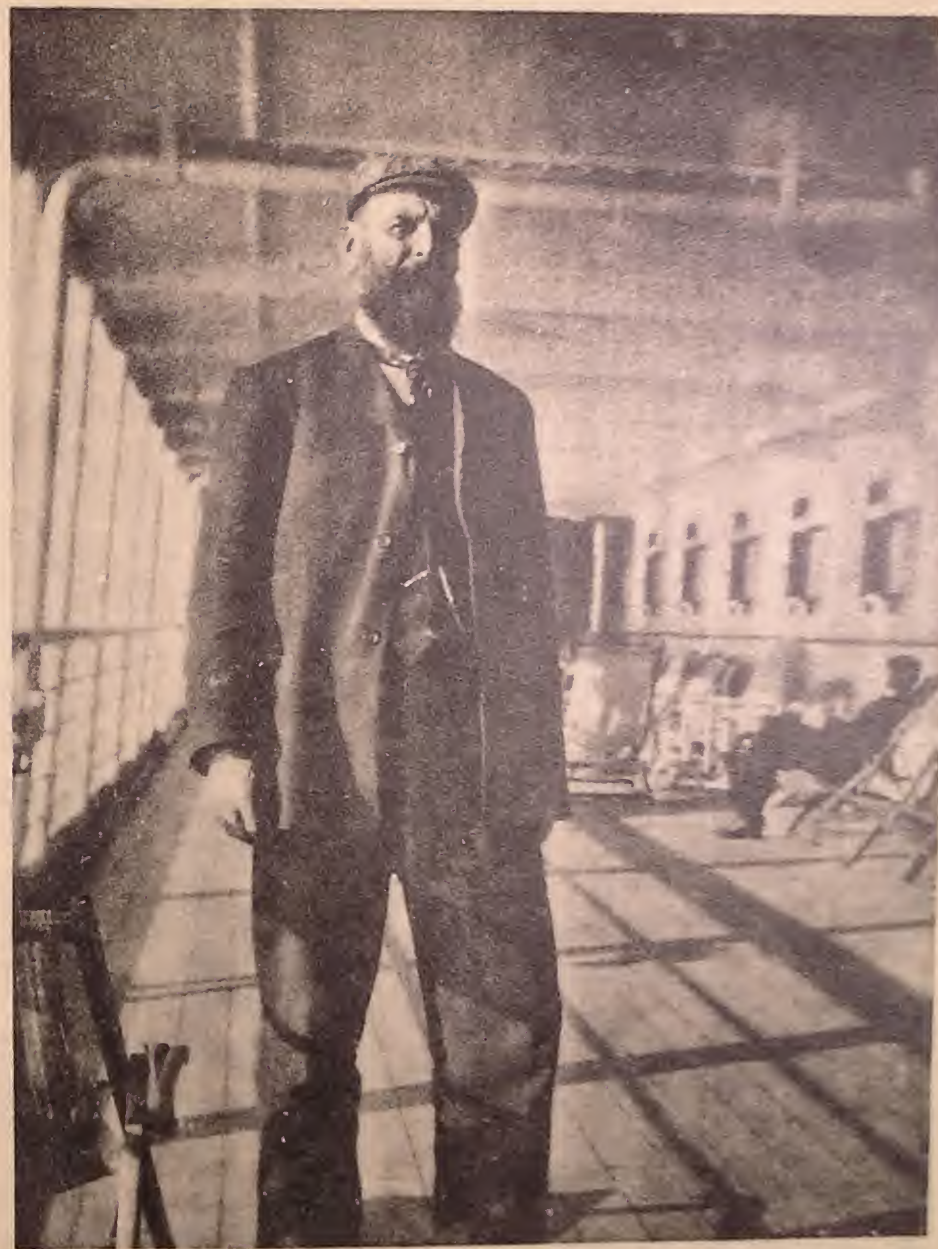
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GENERAL CHRISTIAN DE WET AND GENERAL HART
AS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS



COMMANDANT GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA
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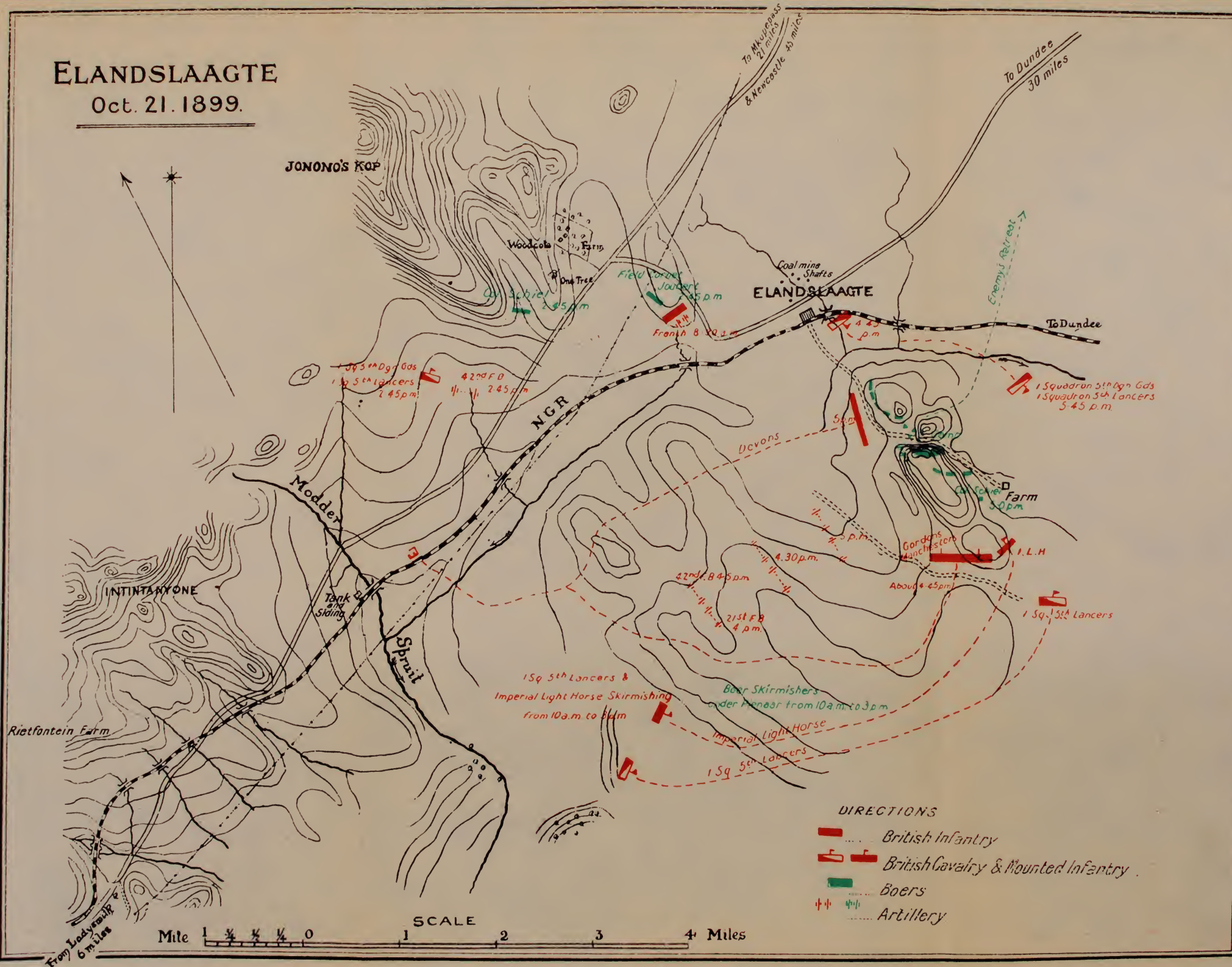


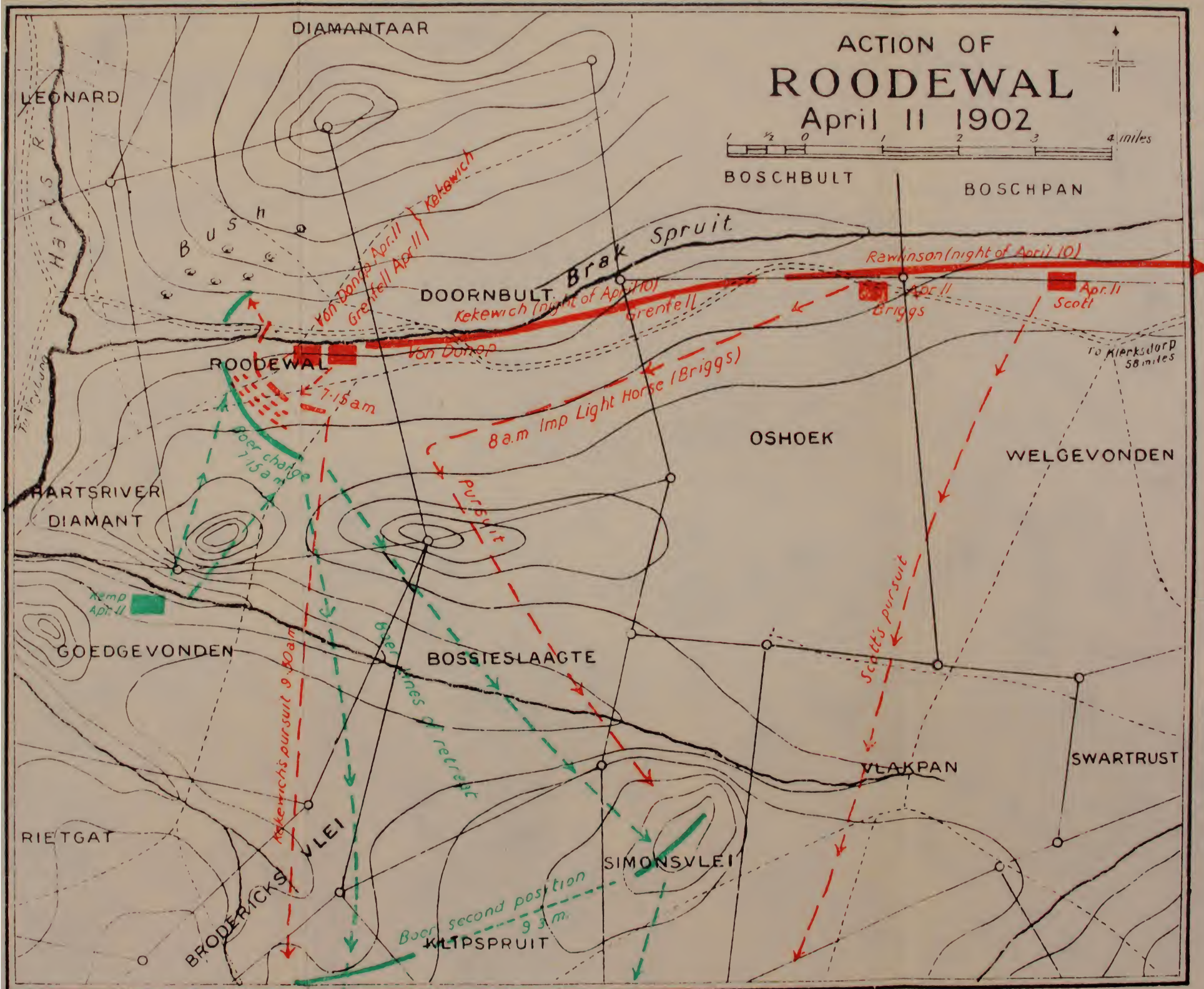
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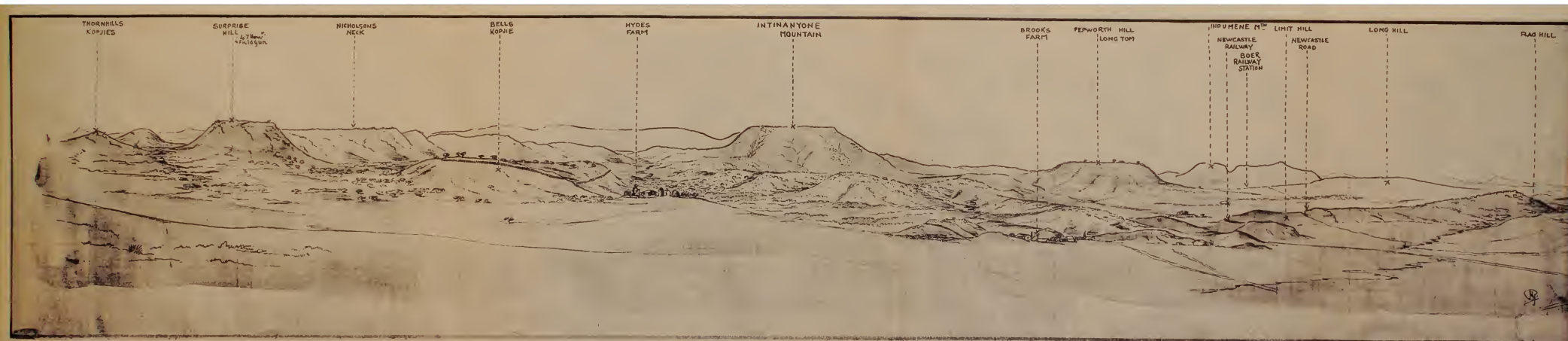


THE FAR-FAMED I. L. H.

Oct. 21. 1899.







A PANORAMA OF LADYSMITH

FROM OBSERVATION HILL LOOKING NORTH AND NORTH-WEST

Photograph of a lightning sketch made by Colonel Rawlinson (afterwards Lord Rawlinson of Trent) when he went up in a balloon from the beleaguered city of Ladysmith. The envelope of the balloon was hit by a six inch shell, but strange to say the balloon sank so slowly to the ground that Colonel Rawlinson escaped with a shaking.

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